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A SHORT HISTORY
OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

by the same author

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**THE WAR FOR WORLD POWER
FROM TOBRUK TO SMOLENSK
THE WAR MOVES EAST
TO STALINGRAD AND ALAMEIN
FOOTHOLD IN EUROPE
THE VICTORY CAMPAIGN**

A SHORT HISTORY
OF THE
SECOND WORLD WAR

And its Social and Political Significance

by
STRATEGICUS

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To M.
but for whom this book would never
have been written

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PREFACE

In this short history of the Second World War I have attempted to give as full an account of the great campaigns as my space permits while concentrating the attention on the purpose of all wars—the removal of those conditions that brought it about. Unless this is achieved war is completely meaningless; and this can be better seen in the recent struggle than ever before. Even now it is impossible to cast up the sum of human misery it loosed upon the world. What Christendom had so laboriously achieved in the years before the First World War may have been far from ideal and its tenure more precarious than we realized. But the recent war ploughed up its very roots over a great part of the area which it had transformed; and we do well to mark this terrible fact. It is a milestone in the world's history; and it behoves us to face the possibility of another and final milestone on the decline into primitive barbarism, none the less appalling because it may hold out the prospect of some distant material amelioration.

The 'prelude', therefore, takes up an appreciable amount of my space and, though the selection of the facts may be considered arbitrary, it is the result of careful thought. Similarly, there is some emphasis, throughout the book, on the human suffering which cast its net so much more widely than ever before. And there is finally more than usual attention paid to the astonishing difference between the West and the East as to the importance of the political end of the war as the final determinant of strategy.

At the end this is a short study which must suffer limitations for that reason and also from the fact that, although it has been long in the literary workshop, there must be per-

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spectives that will seem strange to the ordinary reader, as well as to the critic. An immense amount of detail has been sifted and very much more discarded than finds its way into the printed sheet. Every effort, however, has been made to assure the correctness of the facts, and I have been reassured by finding the early draft confirmed by the mass of material that has since appeared. I have kept my references to a bare minimum as I believe that even the most indefatigable reader finds them a nuisance at the foot of the page; and, assembled at the end, they form at times a superfluity of a different sort. Some of the references, for instance, may be generally quite inaccessible. Such references as I have given are to authenticate the basis of views which may seem novel or provocative.

The general narrative, however much one may strive, tends to escape from its background. How can it be otherwise when one general alone—Wavell—was engaged in five different campaigns simultaneously; and for the greater part of the war there were events that by their importance deserve the record, taking place in four or five countries separated by thousands of miles. To meet this difficulty I have provided a rather elaborate chronology. It is, of course, a mere selection of the innumerable events that marked the war. Its main purpose is to suggest the juxtaposition of the more important of them. Without that background the drama must lose much of its relevance. The chronology may be also of service to those who wish to remind themselves of the main events of this unique six years.

The critics have been so kind to the eight volumes of the history I wrote during the war that I hope they will find this volume, too, as deserving of their considered appreciation. It is as the delightful cartoonist says ‘all my own work’, though I have had considerable help from various quarters, including foreign staffs. If I do not mention the names of these officers, it is because I do not wish to associate them with a responsibility which I alone must bear.

Chapter One

PRELUDE

On 1st September 1939 the Germans invaded Poland and the fuse was fired which was ultimately to detonate the greatest explosion in history. The immediate antecedents of the aggression were matters of common knowledge. They had been followed with painful interest by people in many parts of the world. But no entirely reasonable explanation was then available; and, even now, though a coherent story may be told, it will not sound wholly convincing or credible.

In attempting to write a history of the war it is impossible to ignore this aspect of the subject or to evade the issue on the plea that any short explanation must tend to over-simplification, or be inadequate and to some extent arbitrary. Wars do not break out of themselves; but they may change the course of history and the fate of mankind.

For a long period it was possible to maintain that, whereas war killed its thousands, nature killed its tens of thousands. The great pandemics were a more effective purge than the great wars. But we have reached a phase in the development of civilization in which even the widespread epidemics are only fatal to those who are mainly weaker and even fail to achieve the numerical destruction that results either directly or indirectly from war. The progress of science tends at one and the same time to increase the mortality from war and limit the mortality from disease. War has, therefore, become the greatest of social problems. Civilization is imperilled by its own achievements. It is a brittle structure and its breaking strain is much nearer than anyone expected, despite the warnings of the prophets. In this case, as in so many others, an ounce of proof is worth a ton of prophecy.

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If we are to prevent these periodic purges of war we must first understand something of their origin. The problem is where the inquiry should begin. It seems at first reasonable to trace the Second World War to the rise of Hitler. But Hitler was able to raise himself to power only because he expressed the resentments and frustrations that existed in the majority of German minds, and these can be traced back to the First World War. Some of them, without a doubt, look far beyond it to the philosophies that did much to make that earlier clash inevitable, to the theory of the master-race and the supremacy of the State. The former made a condition of subservience repugnant, and the latter prepared the way for that docile acceptance of the word of command without which it is difficult to conceive of the war being launched by Germany at all.

But Hegel, Fichte, Treitschke and Nietzsche belong to an earlier generation. Their doctrines, however, found a congenial soil in the German mind and needed but the high-pressure propaganda of the National Socialists to flower and flourish. This, however, will not satisfy the inquirer as supplying a wholly adequate explanation. The harvest required a fuller sowing than this.

It is tempting, and it seems in the final analysis necessary, to explain the plan and purpose in terms of the broad trend of European history. There is a mind in events that may better suggest the connection than the detail of the conscious plan of those who launch them on the world. The war may, in fact, be the penultimate birthpangs of the United Europe that was seen in symbol in the Holy Roman Empire. This may have been, as has been brilliantly said, 'none other than the ghost of the old Roman Empire sitting crowned on the tomb thereof'; but it was a substantial ghost that disappeared in the cataclysm of the French Revolution after a thousand years of panoplied history. And Napoleon's objective, with Paris, 'unique and incomparable', conceived as the capital of Europe was the animate restoration of Charlemagne's Empire.

Hitler's grandiose dream, in this conception, was the latest

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term in the secular duel between the Latin and Teutonic nations; but it came as near realization as Napoleon's Empire, and foundered on the same rock. For it was the fate of both men, and particularly the second, to have moved past the milestone where the challenge of the Slav world could be ignored.

Hitler was not more anxious for world dominion than is Stalin; and though his German soul loved military power, he was no more enamoured of what Jomini calls 'the sterile glory of fighting battles merely to win them' than the Russian dictator. His purpose was to conquer Europe and make the European unity the first monument to the 'New Order'. Napoleon had used the same term; and the theme may have been correct, though neither Hitler's nor Stalin's setting would find the approval of the majority of civilized men and women. But each may well be evidence of the tendency of Europe to set into a large unity, a single family, a federation or some form of organized comity, that seems to be moving towards realization to-day. And this is something beyond, and independent of, the observed tendency of economic and political undertakings to coalesce into larger and larger aggregations with general control at the centre and the maximum autonomy at the circumference.

Such speculations, however, should not be permitted to distract us from the recognition that war is a social phenomenon that will not be banished by verbal ostracisms or vague wishes. The idealist may close his eyes to the fact, but it remains a human activity—a morbid activity, one may say—and we must seek its causes in the range of those activities that are common to mankind. Not only greed, ambition and fear but justice and the love of freedom may be the cause of war. What differentiates the recent World Wars from those which preceded them is their exaggeration of the impulses that gave them birth. The claim for *lebensraum*—living space—is not an ignoble nor necessarily an aggressive one. The test is how far the real needs of the people make it legitimate. Neither is the objection to a treaty of peace necessarily unjust; nor even the determination to change the conditions it imposes. But in this

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matter it is necessary to clear away an ambiguity. An aggressor nation which has been defeated can hardly be expected to be enthusiastic about the terms of an imposed peace which not only fails to satisfy the desires that prompted the aggression but even exacts penalties. This does not necessarily imply any injustice in the peace treaty.

Hence when it is maintained, as it is by some writers opposed to Hitler and by many of his admirers and supporters, that the Versailles Treaty caused the war, prudence counsels us to accept the plea with caution. But, if we find reason even to debate this question, it is clear that we are cast back in our inquiry to the years before Hitler's name was known beyond some narrow circle in Bavaria. There is no doubt, in fact, that the Germany which signed the Treaty was bitterly opposed to it; and the first governments of the Weimar Republic were one in their efforts to resist and undermine its application. It is sometimes suggested that the Germans were justified in so doing because Prince Max of Baden opened the negotiations on the night of October 3rd with the request that steps should be taken in accordance with the 'programme set forth by the President of the United States in his message to Congress of January 8th' and that the actual terms were incompatible with it.

The position, however, is not quite so simple as that. The German High Command protested against the terms of the American Note of October 23rd which contained the same formula Mr. Wilson had used from the beginning, though it also laid down the principles of the armistice. They stated in an Order of the Day, signed by Hindenburg and Ludendorff: 'Wilson's reply . . . can then only be for us a call to continue the struggle. . . .' Yet before the German Note to which this was a reply was despatched, Ludendorff admitted to the German Government 'that the line might be broken and defeat come any day'.¹ The army had decided to shift the responsibility for the request for an armistice, which it had urged, on to the shoulders of the government. But the Allies had no knowledge of Hindenburg's Order of the Day.

¹ Quoted from *The Armistice of 1918* by Sir Frederick Maurice, p. 40.

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and so completely missed the significance of the appearance of the civilian Erzberger instead of the General von Gundel who was announced to Foch as the leader of the delegation to sign the armistice.

Foch unconsciously contributed to the fiction that it was not the army but the home front which had collapsed when he refused the British suggestion that only 5 per cent¹ of the German army should be allowed to keep its arms. When the troops returned with bands playing and colours flying, Ebert, the first president of the Weimar Republic, met them at Brandenburg Tor, on December 11th, with the words: 'I greet you who have returned unvanquished from the field of war.'

History affords many examples of a peace which was motivated by the now forbidden quality of 'appeasement' proving durable; and the ephemeral character of the 'peace' of 1919 may at least be due to the punitive spirit that seems to inspire every clause. But the Treaty was defended by the one completely incorruptible idealist among the peace-makers: 'Justice, therefore, is the only possible basis for the settlement of the accounts of this terrible war. But it must be justice for all. There must be justice for the dead and wounded, and for all those who have been orphaned and bereaved that Europe might be freed from Prussian despotism. . . . Somebody must suffer for the consequences of the war. Is it to be Germany or only the people she has wronged? . . . The Allied and Associated Powers, therefore, believe that the peace they have proposed is fundamentally a peace 'of right, fulfilling the terms of the Armistice. . . .'

So spoke Mr. Wilson on 6th April 1919; and though his character and motives have been brilliantly dissected by Keynes, the operation does not go beyond the superficial tissues of the Treaty. Mr. Keynes's main thesis has now been subject to a deeper dissection. It can no longer be maintained that Germany could not pay what was demanded of her, or that she could not pay without inflicting damage upon her

¹ Op. cit., pp. 50-1.

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creditors. Germany in this, again, deceived the Allies, some of whom for idealist or financial reasons had no other wish than to be deceived. She deceived her conquerors as she had done Napoleon.

The Versailles Treaty was not a cause of the recent war except in so far as it marked a defeat which had to be reversed; and it is almost certain that a moderate settlement would have fared no better than the harsh terms of Versailles which were, in fact, never carried out. The defeat was a check to ambitions that ran deeper than such vicissitudes. Continental nations take a very different view of military defeats from the non-military powers. To them it is merely a single episode in an historic train of development; in a year or two events may reverse the verdict.

In these early years of the Republic Germany was not reformed, as many among the Allied nations thought. She was still—as indeed was but natural—intensely nationalist. Her rulers, though men of a tradition upon which the officer caste looked down, had to depend upon the Free Corps and Reichswehr for their rescue from extremists of the Left and Right. The Reichswehr, and the members of the old General Staff, supported the regime in order to preserve its unity and the hope of the resurrection of the German power. General von Seeckt was the soldier who bridged the space between the old army and the new; and, charged with the duty of destroying the General Staff, he set himself to preserve its spirit. It was he who created the Reichswehr and held it above even such challenges as the Kapp Putsch. When he was forced to resign in October 1926, after the appearance of a Hohenzollern prince at the manœuvres, his work was done. He had created a force which in itself was formidable, as inspired by the new ideas that ran through General de Gaulle's *Army of the Future*, and was the foundation of the Wehrmacht. Moreover, Hindenburg was already President, the man who had issued the defiant Order of the Day which rejected the terms of Mr. Wilson's Note of October 23rd accepted by the German Government and behind whom the intrigues to foist upon the politicians the responsibility for their acceptance took place.

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And by this time the spirit of revenge had become a definite danger.

But before this the Germans had passed through a great national crisis. In 1922 the Reparation Commission had declared Germany in voluntary default. For a 'manquement volontaire' the Treaty empowered the Allies to 'take such other measures as the respective Governments may determine to be necessary in the circumstances'; but the proposed French action divided the Allies, and on 8th January 1923 France invaded the Ruhr. Britain stood aloof, and the rift with France went deep.

The results of the French initiative, however, were beyond all expectation. Reparations at once ceased, and the Germans entered on a period of passive resistance. The financial strain began to make itself obvious. The bank rate soared until, on September 15th, it was 90 per cent. The financial system collapsed, and the German middle-classes went through a discipline of misery that has seldom been exceeded. It did not, however, weaken their Government's defiance.

And the Ruhr occupation was not the only bolt in the French quiver. They had begun, with the help of a number of Germans, to tinker with separatism. In October they proclaimed a Rhineland Republic; and separatism was fostered also in Bavaria with much the same effect among a large section of the people as a forcible 'liberation' of Scotland north of the Tweed. On November 9th Ludendorff and Hitler headed a march of Storm Troopers through the streets of Munich as a protest against the declaration of Bavarian independence announced by the Prime Minister, von Kahr, on the previous evening, at a meeting in the Burgerbrau Keller, which was broken up by the sudden appearance of the ill-assorted conspirators. The Bavarian Reichswehr fired on the demonstration and Hitler flung himself down with such abandon that he broke his clavicle. He was arrested, tried in the following February, sentenced to five years in a fortress but released in November with the first volume of his *Mein Kampf* finished.

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Meanwhile the struggle had continued. The French, in fact, did not evacuate the Ruhr until 23rd July 1925, after gaining much less than they had hoped but not before they had convinced Germany that some form of collaboration would be better even for her. It was the appreciation of this that brought Stresemann to the Chancellorship and Foreign Ministry on August 14th; and, though he ceased to be Chancellor in the following November, much happened during his term of office. Poincaré had gone to the Senate and Briand had become Foreign Minister in the preceding April. The chances of a collaboration that would be beneficial alike to Germany and France seemed brighter than anyone had thought possible.

Under Gustav Stresemann, Leader of the People's Party, many contemporaries thought the Weimar Republic was beginning to assimilate the pacific spirit which in the twenties was sweeping over Europe. He was even awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace with Mr. Austen Chamberlain and M. Briand; and yet his diaries show that he regarded the Locarno Treaty (1925) as safeguarding the west, which Germany was in no position to attack, and leaving her free to achieve revision in the east by economic though not by warlike means. He secured her entry into the League of Nations as a Great Power; but, in signing the Pact of Paris (the Briand-Kellogg Peace Pact) two years later, in August 1928, he secured also the promise of the final evacuation of the Rhineland by June 1930, thus removing, in the words of his diary, the 'stranglehold from our neck'. But to Britain and France it seemed that the sun was lighting more splendid horizons; and the next year M. Briand advocated, and the European nations accepted in principle, the idea of a United States of Europe.

When Stresemann died in October 1929, Hjalmar Schacht, president of the Reichsbank (1923-30), with whom he co-operated to secure credits from the United States, was already well advanced in that pursuit. The third of the men who paved the way for the restoration of the Reich had launched his programme for the liquidation of the reparations. In forty-two lectures in the United States in the autumn of 1930,

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he played upon two themes: (1) reparations were the main threat to the repayment of the American credits, and (2) the Entente were well able to pay their war debts. The results were the Hoover moratorium of the following year and the Johnson Act which prohibited further credits to nations which did not fulfil the service of their war debts. This would have been a disastrous blow to the Allies in the Second World War but for the 'Lease-Lend' expedient.

When Schacht returned to Germany after his American tour he had his first meeting with Hitler and attended the Harzburg demonstration in October 1931. He was immensely impressed with the lance-corporal and discerned in him, oddly enough, 'genius and measure'. Genius he may have had; but neither he nor any other characteristic German possessed 'measure', except in a purely tactical sense. It is the German fault to be *démesuré*; and without it he would have failed to produce as great an impression as he did upon such dissimilar men as Seeckt and Schacht. The general said, after a first meeting in 1923, 'We were at one in our aims, only our paths were different'; and eight years later he advised his sister to vote for Hitler. What Hitler brought to Germany was the magic appeal of the demagogue which Mr. Wells, in one of his many erroneous prophecies, said in 1901 could no longer rule the masses. It was the masses alone which the demagogue could move; and he alone could move them. It was this that brought the Reichswehr over to Hitler's side.

But by this time Hitler was well on the way to power. He was a house painter who had been a lance-corporal in the 1914-18 war and, founder of the Nationalist Workers' Party in opposition to the Social Democrats, he contrived to appeal to all who had grievances. Particularly he appealed to those who resented the operation of the Versailles Treaty; and this, as we have seen, included even the vast majority of the Social Democrats. His National Socialist Party which had secured a negligible representation in the earlier election, in 1930 captured 107 seats and thus became the second strongest party in the State.

The following year the Harzburg rally confirmed his posi-

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tion; for a common front was there achieved with the German Nationalists and the Stahlhelm, with the support of heavy industry. Next year the National Socialists became the largest single party in the State. In the election for the Presidency, although Hindenburg was a candidate, a second ballot was necessary and the result showed 19,300,000 votes for Hindenburg, 13,400,000 for Hitler and 3,700,000 for the communist candidate. It was already certain that Hitler must soon come to power. Papen was Chancellor for the moment; but, in the second election, in September, although Hitler lost thirty-four seats he still retained 196. He had captured 11,737,000 votes and the communists 5,980,000, the largest *free* vote ever given them in any part of the world. Schleicher had succeeded Papen; but, when he failed to secure sufficient support, Hindenburg was forced to call upon Hitler to form a government. Thus, on 30th January 1933 Hitler became German Chancellor. He had achieved this position, it is important to note, by ordinary political means.

The Reichstag which had only been elected three months before was dissolved and the elections arranged for March 5th. But on February 2nd occurred the Reichstag fire; and the Nazi police at once circulated the report that the fire had been arranged by the communists as the signal for revolution. By this means the National Socialists secured 44 per cent of the votes and, with the Nationalist Party, represented 52 per cent of the electorate.

At the moment the one change he made in his ministry was the appointment of Goebbels to take charge of propaganda. The full significance of this move cannot yet be estimated; but it opened the attack on the German mind and in time led to its subjection. Its immediate effect can be seen in the fact that, on the death of Hindenburg, in August 1934, the office of President was amalgamated with that of Chancellor; and it was only necessary to arrange a mock election to give colour to the nation's approval of Hitler. There was no other candidate and no electioneering against him was allowed. It was, therefore, less remarkable that he secured 38,400,000 votes, out of the 45,500,000 cast, than that seven millions

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did not vote for him. Germany was not yet completely enslaved.

But already Hitler had destroyed the other parties; and now, seated firmly in the saddle, he set about implementing the policy which had brought him to power at the head of so ill-assorted an army. Schacht was set to a task—‘*The economic preparation for war*’—that if known outside Germany might at once have modified the attitude of the Western Powers. Hitler was now able to test his wings without creating an international crisis. But his first essay in power politics did not succeed. In his move to incorporate Austria he was confronted by a hostile Mussolini who had his suspicions about the murder of the Chancellor Dolfuss. But Hitler need not have been disturbed. The Allies were soon to heal that breach; and he was more successful in placating his eastern neighbour. Poland was soothed by an agreement for ten years; and no one at the time knew how lightly such engagements sat upon his shoulders.

In March 1935 he gave Europe an object lesson which should have been taken to heart. He formally endorsed the reintroduction of conscription. Germany had never kept the engagements of the Versailles Treaty honestly; but open defiance was a graver matter. The signatory Powers, however, did nothing. Britain had been conducting a Peace Ballot, and no fewer than 11,640,066 forms were returned. A Disarmament Conference was sitting at Geneva. In the autumn of 1933 Fulham had returned a candidate solely on the peace issue. What an irony that when the new German dictator was forcing the pace in rearmament Britain should be so engrossed with a campaign for whipping up support for a peace policy! The result of this was that the Conservative Party whips were afraid of taking any action. ‘Supposing I had gone to the country’, said Mr. Baldwin, about eighteen months later, ‘and said that Germany was rearming and that we must rearm. Does anyone think that this pacific democracy would have rallied to the cry at that moment?’¹ He did not mean, as some have disingenuously maintained, that he

¹ House of Commons, 12th November 1936.

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had actually gone to the country on a peace and League of Nations' issue. He says distinctly 'I am speaking of 1933 and 1934'; and his meaning was that he waited until December 1935, when the trend of events was clearer, and so obtained a mandate for rearmament that no one would have believed possible twelve months before.

So Hitler secured his first international success and his position was very considerably strengthened. He was able, indeed, to effect a naval agreement with Britain and this, by suggesting a complete indifference to French susceptibilities, tended to deepen suspicions where the fullest confidence should have been preserved.

He was to be strengthened still more by the British and French handling of the Abyssinian dispute. That the League of Nations should have been invoked in the dispute was inevitable. But the trouble was that Italy's intentions and movements had from the first been fully known to Britain and France who, making no protest, were taken to have no objection. It was only when all the pieces were in position that the sudden explosion at Geneva occurred. From the Italian point of view the action taken later by the League, and principally at the prompting of Britain, was unjust and provocative for another reason. The Japanese action in China had passed with formal condemnation. The Rule of Law cannot be maintained by selective action; and yet, on this occasion, the League Assembly voted by 50 against 2 that collective measures be taken against Italy. In November the British Government launched Sanctions by Order in Council, and everyone knew that neither Britain nor France was prepared to go further. Britain had chosen the worst of all policies—to offend deeply without checking or preventing the aggression. In effect she presented Italy with a ready-made triumph over the League and Germany with a partner.

Hitler was quick to seize the implications of the new situation and four months after Britain had imposed Sanctions by Order in Council, he denounced the Locarno Pact and sent his troops into the Rhineland. Here was a fresh and more

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provocative challenge to the Powers. The demilitarization of the Rhineland was a substitute, even if a poor one, for the occupation which France had waived on the assumption that Britain and the United States would honour their joint guarantee. France, accordingly, with full assurances from Poland and the Little Entente, at first determined to mobilize; and then began to consult the British Cabinet. She found no encouragement there. This was the last certain chance France—and Britain—had of checking Germany. Hitler had been advised by his generals not to take the risk; but that cunning chess player had read the democracies aright. He knew that no democracy will go to war on any ground but sheer necessity; so he carefully moved a pawn. The democracies had long ago forgotten the significance of the pawn and consequently ignored the move. Hitler had won.

The success increased his prestige enormously. He had shown his generals that his conclusions about the weakness of democracies were well founded; and he had gained in self-confidence. He began to cultivate better relations with Italy. He made an Anti-Communist Pact with Japan. He had intervened in the Spanish Civil War, some months before; and this episode cut sharp divisions in Europe and in British opinion. He thought that if he could secure the gratitude of the Spanish Nationalists, and possibly embroil France in a profitless struggle in Spain, his essential purposes would be advanced.

But although his intentions were beginning to be appreciated and his name had become anathema to the Socialists, on 26th December 1936, six weeks after Mr. Baldwin's speech clearly identifying Germany as the danger, Mr. Herbert Morrison wrote in *Forward*, 'Arms? Maybe. But against whom—Germany or Russia? . . . The Government flatly refuse to tell us. Very well. We must . . . flatly refuse to support their armament policy.' The Conservatives knew the danger and eared to take adequate action. Labour affected to know even better; and refused to endorse the belated preparation. Gibbon wrote, 'The various tribes of Britain possessed valour without conduct, and the love of freedom without the spirit

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of union.' In the years immediately preceding the war, we appeared to be reverting to the primitive type.

In France, under M. Blum, the Government's supporters were agitating for a forty-hour week when the Germans were working sixty. In the following year Russia carried out an army purge. In October Belgium asked Britain and France to release her from the obligations she had undertaken under the Treaty of Locarno. The next month Hitler was successful in persuading Mussolini to sign the Anti-Communist Pact.

It was against the background of these events that, in this same month—the date, 5th November 1937, is significant—Hitler held a conference with the Minister of War, Blomberg, the heads of the three services, Fritsch, Raeder and Göring, and the Foreign Minister, Neurath. He said that he wished his statements on this occasion to be regarded as his last will and testament in case of his death; and he then outlined his ideas of German expansion. Germany's need was for *lebensraum*; and, since neither England nor France could tolerate a strong Germany, living space could only be acquired by the use of force and the question for Germany was where the greatest possible conquest could be made at the lowest cost. The best time to strike he said would be between 1943 and 1945. After that the position would deteriorate. 'The rearming of the Army, Navy and Air Force as well as the formation of the Officers' Corps are practically concluded.' Hence he was determined if still alive to solve the problems of German living space not later than 1943–5. Circumstances however might compel him to act before then. The internal political crisis in France might make it impossible to use her army against Germany. 'In that case the time for action against Czechoslovakia would have come'; and the same effect would be caused by France being involved in war with another state. When Germany had secured a common frontier with Hungary, Poland would more probably remain neutral in case of a clash with France.

The important point is that as early as 1937 Hitler was calmly contemplating 'the annexation of the two states' Czechoslovakia and Austria. What was his ultimate objective

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can only be inferred from descriptive rather than concrete terms. It is living space in 'Europe', he said, 'agriculturally useful space'. The direction in which it was to be sought is suggested by the preoccupation with Czechoslovakia; and by Göring's statement to a Council of Ministers on 4th September 1936 that he had received a long memorandum from Hitler on the armament programme which 'starts from the basic thought that *the showdown with Russia is inevitable*'. It seems, then, that in spite of the disclaimers in the various private speeches of which we now have note, the ultimate objective was south-eastern Europe, the Ukraine, which was to be incorporated or brought under control.

The events which stirred the world must be seen against this background. While statesmen strove to keep Europe out of war Hitler, as we now know from the Nuremberg revelations, was only concerned to avoid war provided he secured the living space he thought necessary but otherwise to engage in it on the most favourable conditions. This was not known outside a restricted circle even in Germany at the time, though her immense expenditure on armaments and the open preference for 'guns' to 'butter' did not pass unnoticed; and in 1938 it became increasingly difficult to ignore her warlike actions.

Mr. Churchill has called attention to the initiative of Mr. Roosevelt on January 11th, of that year. He then proposed to invite the representatives of Britain, France, Germany and Italy to Washington to discuss the causes of the deterioration of the international situation—if the proposal were 'cordially' approved by the British Government. Unfortunately it was not; and another golden chance of halting the drift towards war was lost.

Hitler about this time appointed Joachim von Ribbentrop his Minister for Foreign Affairs. Any possibility of peace there may have remained disappeared with this man's advent to power. For he fostered all the wishes of a Hitler rapidly achieving a position beyond challenge in the Reich. *He* retained some doubts about Britain. Ribbentrop was too stupid seriously to harbour any. Britain would not fight 'for the sake of a local central European' issue. All would be well.

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A week after Ribbentrop became Foreign Minister he took the first steps to destroy Austria's independence. The Chancellor, von Schuschnigg, was browbeaten into accepting changes that handed over control to Seyss-Inquart, the leader of the Austrian Nazis; and only after Hitler had boasted his success did the Chancellor rebel. He announced a plebiscite. Hitler wasted no time; and, on March 11th, he sent the German troops across the Austrian frontier. Two days later the union of Austria with the German Reich was proclaimed.

Mussolini's thoughts must have been bitter when he saw accomplished the Anschluss he had sworn to prevent. But he was powerless to do anything. The reaction in Britain was much as might have been expected. The remilitarization of the Rhineland had been taken calmly, and there was a certain justice in the Anschluss that made it very difficult to challenge. Hitler was cunning enough to see the wisdom of sugaring the pill for Mussolini and, some months later, he visited the Duce in Rome. The welcome was a little forced; but the end was achieved. No one can have liked the trend of events; for now Hitler had stripped France of the small protection of the Rhineland and torn away the southern protection of Czechoslovakia. The Sudeten Germans at once redoubled their agitation. Their importance was out of all proportion to their numbers; for they could not be given self-determination in its full sense without undermining the Czechoslovakian scheme of defence. Moreover, as the southern flank was now exposed by the German occupation of Austria, such a change would render the Czechs defenceless.

In September the situation became swiftly critical. On the 12th of the month Hitler declared that the oppression of the Sudeten Germans must end and, his technique recalling the moves against Austria, the spectre of war reared its head. It was when the danger signal could no longer be ignored that Mr. Neville Chamberlain took a momentous decision. He had been Premier only sixteen months and he was already an old man. He came to the conclusion that what diplomacy had failed to achieve personal intervention might secure. He flew to Berchtesgaden and had an interview with Hitler. After the

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first apparently gracious reception the Premier flew back to report to the Cabinet; and on September 22nd, he returned for a second conference. This brought matters to a head. Hitler now invited Mr. Chamberlain, M. Daladier, the French Premier, and S. Mussolini to a conference at Munich to settle the Czechoslovak question finally.

Only half of this episode, it can now be realized, was enacted in public. Fifteen months earlier the Blomberg directive visualized 'a strategic pounce on Czechoslovakia'; and, as the months went by, the plan was revised and polished. Mr. Chamberlain first approached Hitler nine days after the Führer had held a conference with Brauchitsch, who was to command the campaign, and Keitel. Six days later he had another conference with the two generals, Halder and several other officers. Four days before Mr. Chamberlain returned to Germany the assignment of the different commands was made with Rundstedt, Bock, Reichenau, Leeb and List in charge of the various armies.

When Mr. Chamberlain read Hitler's telegram of invitation to Munich to the Commons wild cheering broke out from all parts of the House. But all that Munich accomplished was to sanction the annexation of the areas occupied by the Sudeten Germans. Pressure had to be brought to bear upon the Czechs to secure their agreement; for they realized that their scheme of defence was fatally undermined. But Mr. Chamberlain returned from Munich as a saviour. Peace had before seemed to hang by a thread. The heads of the British and French armies had been in consultation; and on the day of the Munich Conference, orders had been issued for the mobilization of the British fleet. But, with the agreement and Hitler's signed declaration that the method of consultation should be adopted to deal with future disagreements between the two countries, as it had been in the Anglo-German naval agreement, and that the signatories should continue their efforts to remove possible sources of difference and thus assist in assuring the peace of Europe, the crisis appeared to be over.

Mr. Chamberlain received a magnificent ovation when he

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reached London. Waving a piece of paper he told the crowds it means 'peace in our time'. But Mr. Duff Cooper at once resigned; and, in the debate on the agreement, Mr. Churchill delivered a strong attack. Mr. Chamberlain's difficulty was not only that Britain was not prepared for war but that the French were as little ready and as much disinclined to accept the logic of their treaty with Czechoslovakia. Russia, also a party to the treaty, was ignored in the discussions and drew the worst possible conclusions from the episode. France could hardly be reassured by Hitler's recalling the Anglo-German naval agreement. At one stroke, therefore, Hitler had secured the betrayal of Czechoslovakia, the deepening of the rift between Russia and the Western Powers and an increase in the suspicions of France that Britain deserved little reliance. It may have been this conjunction of successes, and the conviction that British action would be restrained because of the internal crisis in France, that caused him to anticipate his chosen time for challenging the Western Powers.

The following March Hitler occupied the rest of Czechoslovakia; and, after that, he could deceive no one any more. In the preceding January he referred in glowing terms to the fifth anniversary of the German Non-Aggression Pact with Poland. When, by the occupation of Czechoslovakia he had shown his complete contempt for his written engagements, Poland read those words in the Reichstag in a new light; and she was left in no doubt about his intentions as to her own future. A few days after seizing Czechoslovakia and thereby uncovering Poland's southern flank, he took Memel and proposed that Danzig should become a part of the Reich and that Germany should have a corridor across the Polish Corridor. The Poles made counter-suggestions about the Corridor; but as these were unpalatable to Hitler he later accused the Poles of not replying to his suggestion. The Nazi press began to give much space to stories of Polish oppression of the German minority, just as it had to atrocities against the Sudeten Germans before the Munich Conference.

At this juncture Britain gave Poland (March 31st) a guarantee: 'In the event of any action which clearly threatened

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Polish independence, and which the Polish Government considered it vital to resist with their national forces, His Majesty's Government would feel themselves bound at once to lend the Polish Government all support.'

It is difficult to think that Mr. Chamberlain would have gained support for this innovation in British policy if he had not gone so far to meet Hitler's demands. He had already accused the Führer of breaking his word; but that was now Hitler's well-marked procedure. What the occupation of Bohemia and Moravia proved beyond any shadow of doubt was the patent fact that Hitler had now abandoned even the pretence of keeping faith in any agreement. France joined Britain in the guarantee to Poland under the same compulsion. But it is now clear that Hitler did not as yet wish to challenge Britain. In the preceding November he had ordered preparations to be made for the occupation of the Free State of Danzig with the condition that it was not to involve a war with Poland;¹ and, a week before Mr. Chamberlain had announced the guarantee to Poland, he had informed Keitel that he 'would not like to drive Poland into the arms of Britain'. Nevertheless the project should be considered so that, in especially favourable circumstances, 'Poland shall be crushed so completely that she need not be taken into account politically for decades'. By the 'especially favourable circumstances' he meant if Poland could be so isolated that the war could be confined to that country. Ten days later, however, he ordered preparations to be made so that the operation could be carried out from September 1st.

Mr. Chamberlain's next step was to announce compulsory military training; and Hitler replied with a denunciation of the 1935 Naval Agreement and the 1934 Non-Aggression Pact with Poland. The shadow of impending events now began to spur nations which lay beyond the immediate area of conflict to unusual activity. President Roosevelt, once more, courageously took the initiative, and attempted to extract from Germany and Italy a pledge that for ten years they would not attack a number of named countries. Hitler re-

¹ *The Nuremberg Documents*, by Peter de Mendelssohn, p. 49.

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jected the proposal. Less noticed, but even more significant, was the replacement of Litvinov by Molotov as Soviet Foreign Minister. Hitler later informed his generals that he took that to mean a reorientation in Russian foreign policy. But Britain did not share that conclusion, though it is difficult at this stage to understand how she could resist it. For on April 17th Russia had suggested a triple alliance between Great Britain, France and the Soviet Union and Britain found it unacceptable. Germany was not so unresponsive to the Russian ambassador's suggestion to the German State Secretary, Weizsäcker, *on the same day*, that Russia saw no reason why relations between the two countries should not 'become better and better'. On his return from Moscow, M. Maisky saw Lord Halifax on April 29th; but Britain and Russia were still as far apart as ever. In four days M. Litvinov had resigned! But, unperturbed, the British Government continued its proposals. Mr. Strang was sent to Moscow on June 12th to discuss the situation with Molotov. Little was achieved. Later on a British and French military mission went to Moscow *at the Soviet invitation*; and on August 12th Staff conversations were opened. They were apparently doomed from the first, for two reasons. First, Britain and France could not see eye to eye about the question of surrendering the Baltic States to Russia, and Poland would not agree to Russian forces entering her country. Second, Hitler, as early as May 23rd, was telling Göring, Keitel and Raeder that contact must be established with Moscow. *On the very day that the Staff conversations with Britain and France were opened*, he was able to inform Ciano that contact had been achieved.

Russia was carrying on negotiations with both sides. The result appeared when the Non-Aggression Pact with Russia was signed on August 23rd. The terms of the Secret Protocol signed at the same time are unintelligible if both sides did not assume that Hitler was about to strike. Stalin, for tangible considerations, gave Hitler the green light. Two days before Hitler had informed his commanders-in-chief that he had taken the initiative, entering into political discussions in connection with a commercial agreement. 'A proposal was made

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for a Non-Aggression Pact. Then came a general proposal from Russia.'

Poland was now, indeed, isolated and Hitler thought the Western Powers would realize that it was useless to fight or they would come to that conclusion when Poland had been stricken to the dust. Mr. Chamberlain tried to remove the impression in a letter written the day after the pact was signed and begged that negotiations should take place. Hitler bluntly refused. On August 25th, an Anglo-Polish Alliance was signed; and Hitler postponed the attack on Poland arranged for the next day. 'I shall have to see whether we can eliminate British intervention' he told Göring. It was but a momentary respite. Ribbentrop had told Ciano: '*We want war.*' President Roosevelt again intervened. The Pope broadcast an appeal for peace. The King of Belgium intervened on behalf of the Oslo Powers. Hitler turned a deaf ear to every appeal. Instead he demanded, *when it was too late to be possible*, that a Polish plenipotentiary should arrive within twenty-four hours to sign the terms which Hitler might put before him. Then he suddenly crossed the Polish frontier at dawn on September 1st. Two days later, after the refusal of the terms of Britain and France, the Allies were at war.

This long and tangled story has not referred to the terrorism of the Hitler regime, for dictatorships cannot be maintained otherwise. Until a world authority is formed, with adequate power to intervene in such cases, that might at least be considered a domestic issue. But Hitler's external policy shows at every stage cunning, lying and treachery to secure that every country should in the end be brought under the domination of as complete a tyranny as the world has ever known. It was not even, as a wise American commentator said, the 'Christian ethic' that was at stake. It was the pre-Christian ethic; for unless men can keep the substance of truth and fidelity no human society is possible. This is the natural ethic. One might go further and insist that the doctrine of might as the only right precludes the formation of any but pre-civilized states. 'It is the evil things we fight,' said Mr. Chamberlain.

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How little, how late, he recognized it. Stalin had concluded a pact that was, in the end, to hand over the peoples of Europe to a misery that knows no parallel. Whether they strove to be neutral or not, with the exception of the peoples of the Iberian Peninsula who were kept out of the war by the stubborn adroitness of General Franco, one after another was engulfed. Terror, fire, rapine and sadistic cruelty stalked across Europe. When Hitler's plans foundered in Europe he persuaded Japan to spread the war to Asia. America, also, became involved. The horror spread across south-east Asia up to the doors of India and Australia; but the primitive savagery of Japan could not equal the perverted bestialities that took place in Germany and Russia. Few peoples' lives, anywhere, remained unaffected by the war which exceeded every earlier outbreak not only in savagery but also in prodigies of heroism and the efflorescence of science. What benefits, indeed, science contributed in saving life it more than counterbalanced in destroying it.

How simple and satisfying it would be if we could conclude that this blackout in civilization was entirely due to Hitler or Stalin or both. Hitler's was the plan; and he bought Stalin's acquiescence by an agreement to share the spoils. There would have been no war without the Non-Aggression Pact. There would have been none if Britain and France had been content to accept the rule of force on the continent. But would there have been war if Britain and France had been materially and morally prepared? At long last both nations came to realize that the triumph of Hitler must threaten their own security. The follies of the British and French leaders, upon whom the responsibility for policy lay, reflected those of the led; and these were so concerned with moulding and enjoying their own way of life that they had no mind to give to the price of the peace they claimed to desire above all things. It is, indeed, the weakness of democracies that they fail to recognize first, what they inevitably see at length, that even peace may be bought too dear.

No one can divest himself of some share in the responsibility for leaving Hitler free to pursue his warlike course until he

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could only be stopped by war. It was by the will of the people that his first tentative defiance was ignored. They were overjoyed that, even at Munich, war was averted. It was by their will that a powerful campaign for peace was carried out at the very time Hitler was clearly preparing for war; that M. Blum in France was countenancing policies that irretrievably weakened his country. The sovereign people insisted on making their voices heard at each development of the crisis; and the pressure of their social and political demands played a significant part in delaying effective opposition to the forces which threatened their destruction.

Chapter Two

THE BARRIERS ARE TORN DOWN

September 1939–December 1940

It is upon resources immediately available that battles turn; and Poland could not match the might of Germany. She began her general mobilization only on August 31st and against Germany's 48 divisions,¹ 6 of them panzer, 4 light armoured and 4 motorized, she could only muster 30 infantry divisions and 11 cavalry brigades with a single mechanized brigade, one motorized and one mountain brigade. For service with the field army Kesselring and Lohr had 2,000 first-line aircraft (over 400 of them dive-bombers), based on Königsberg and Vienna, respectively, against Poland's 377 military aircraft.

The Western Allies were in no shape to make good the deficiencies of the Polish forces. General Gort had ultimately 12 divisions and France, including the 26 engaged in the Maginot Line, 102 divisions. But her mobilization was not complete until September 20th when all was over in Poland. France had over 3,000 tanks of light and heavy categories, but there were only 3 organized armoured divisions; and Gort had no armoured division at his disposal. The Royal Air Force could not compare in numbers with the Luftwaffe, and it was trained mainly for a strategic role. What could be sent

¹ Here, as on other occasions, numbers differ according to the authority. The inclusion of Reserve and Landwehr units makes significant differences. On September 14th, for instance, Polish authorities give the number of German units identified on Polish territory as 58 and 17 of occupation troops, making a total of 75 divisions. The writer has throughout selected figures which give as fair a picture as possible, including immediate reserves on both sides, if on either. Of the 58 mentioned above only 44 were regular (*Aktiv*) divisions.

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to the *Armée de l'Air* could not render it capable of meeting the Luftwaffe on equal terms. Moreover the strength of the defensive had become an obsession; and, however we discount it, the Siegfried Line seemed adequately held by the 40 divisions allocated to it while the main German strength was turned against the east. Poland was, therefore, doomed to short shrift before a single German crossed the frontier.

The naval position was altogether different. Britain had 12 battleships, 3 battle-cruisers, 6 aircraft-carriers, 18 large and 60 small cruisers, 193 destroyers and 61 submarines, while France had 7 battleships, 2 battle-cruisers, 1 aircraft-carrier, 7 large and 43 small cruisers, 26 destroyers and 76 submarines. Against this impressive combination Germany could put to sea with only 2 battle-cruisers, 3 'pocket-battleships', 2 large and 6 small cruisers, 22 destroyers and 59 submarines. The Allied naval resources were, therefore, overwhelming and they conditioned the general strategy: blockade and action on exterior lines.

But the determinant of the first phase of the war was the spiritual factor we call morale. Dislike of Hitler and the system he founded should not blind us to the fact that he sent his armies into the field with a high morale and a missionary fervour worthy of a better cause. Bad ideas as well as good, half-truths as well as irreproachable ideals, can nurture this devouring fire. It derives partly from national character and tradition, but it can be fostered to a remarkable pitch by modern technical propaganda.

Though morale can never be a match for the internal combustion engine scientifically used, the lack of it overshadowed the first phase of the war and came near to ending it in Hitler's favour. For the strategy with which the Allies entered the war cast France for the role of checking the first onslaught of Germany, and France failed, not through lack of numbers or disparity of material equipment but because internal tensions had disrupted her unity and steadfastness in the face of the enemy.

The Polish command cherished no illusions about their

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ability to hold up the bulk of the German army indefinitely. A protocol signed with France on May 19th, promised them the immediate assistance of the French Air Force, intervention of a purely limited scope on the fourth day of mobilization and an offensive by the main forces on the fifteenth day. In the event, the French fear of reprisals led to even the British bombers confining their offensive to the distribution of leaflets.

The rape of Czechoslovakia had extended Poland's vulnerable frontiers to over 1,200 miles. The fear of repercussions on the people's morale forbade her to abandon the forward area which contained her main industrial and war installations. But, committed to defend it, her armies were open to a 'Cannae' of unparalleled proportions; and this dictated the form of the German strategy. A great inner and outer encirclement was planned. The Czestochowa Gap in the south is separated from Schneidemühl, in German Pomerania, by less than 200 miles. The inner pincers were to operate from these two areas. The outer encirclement was to be carried out from East Prussia and Galicia, and the arms were to close about the middle and upper Bug with all the forces which might escape through Warsaw within them.

General von Brauchitsch had two German army groups to complete this ambitious plan. General von Bock's northern group included General von Kluge's 4th German army and General Küchler's 3rd army. The former, the stronger and more mobile, was to cut the Polish Corridor from German Pomerania and form the northern arm of the inner envelopment. The role of the 3rd army was to assist in cutting the Corridor and strengthen the inner envelopment and, later, to form the northern arm of the outer envelopment. General von Rundstedt commanded the southern group with von Manstein as his chief of staff. This group included the 10th army of General von Reichenau which was to form the southern arm of the inner envelopment, with his left covered by General von Blasowitz's 8th army, and the 14th army of General List on his right to form the southern arm of the outer envelopment.

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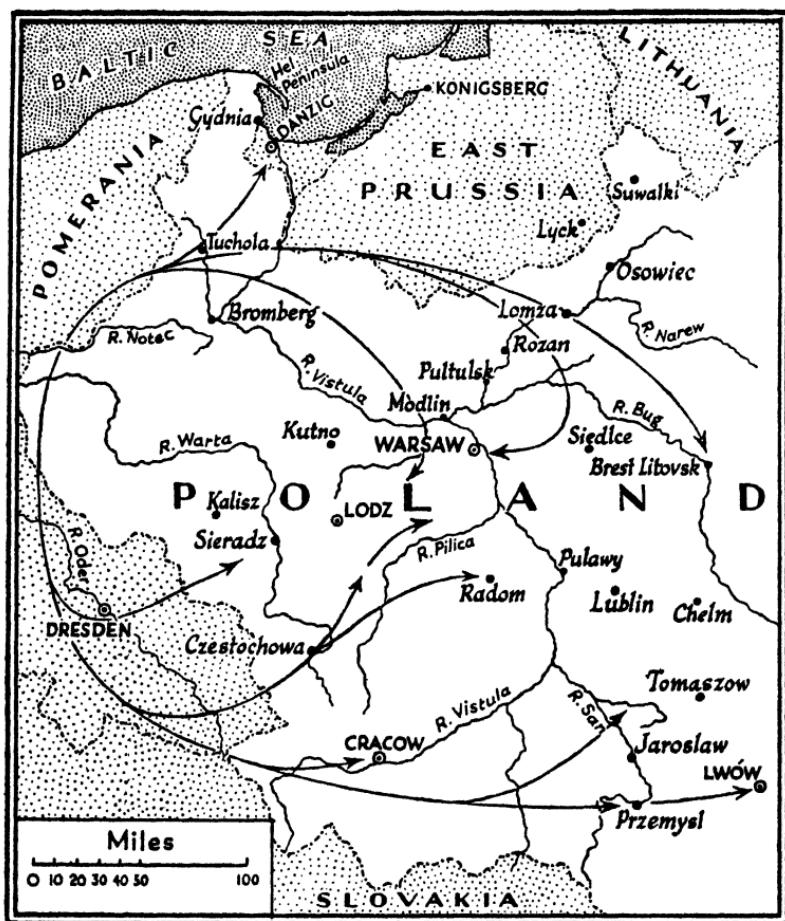
To oppose this impressive force the Polish command grouped their main strength in General Bortnowski's Torun army, General Kutrzeba's Poznan army, General Rommel's Lodz army and General Szylling's Cracow army. These four armies accounted for more than two-thirds of the troops available at the outbreak of hostilities. There were two army detachments in the north: General Mlot-Fialkowski's Narev operational group of 2 infantry divisions and 2 cavalry brigades and General Przedzimirski's Modlin army of the same composition to protect the northern flank and Warsaw. There were also General Fabrycy's Carpathian army of 2 infantry divisions and 2 mountain brigades; and the 'Prussia army' of General Dab-Biernacki which, with 5 infantry divisions and 1 cavalry brigade, was to act in reserve to cover the approach to the middle Vistula. On the ground the Germans had a two to one superiority in fire power; they had twenty times as many tanks and between five and seven times as many aircraft. From the Luftwaffe's initial attack the Polish Air Force was dominated; in three days it was, in effect, destroyed.

They had, moreover, perfect control of a force designed for shock action. The Polish armies seem to have passed out of central control almost as soon as battle was joined. Marshal Smigly-Rydz, the commander-in-chief, found his orders outpaced by events almost from the first. Without help from the Allies, or direction from the command, the heroic Polish soldiers took the field in real isolation; and the speed of the German movement fell upon them as a complete surprise.

In the first two days blows fell in the north and south that determined the whole campaign. Reichenau was through the Czestochowa Gap and was threatening the left of the Lodz army and the right of the Cracow army while List covered his left in an advance on Katowice and broke through the Carpathians towards the left rear of the Cracow army. In the north the position was scarcely more encouraging. In thirty-six hours the troops had met on the Vistula; in two days the fate of the troops in the Corridor was sealed.

The preliminaries being complete, Kluge began to strike down towards the Torun and Poznan armies while Reiche-

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i. The Polish Campaign

nau moved up towards their rear, west of Warsaw. The 'Prussia army' was overtaken by Reichenau's armour and, in the battle of Radom, surrounded and destroyed. The Lodz army had been roughly handled and forced back; the Cracow army had been withdrawn to the east. On the evening of September 6th a general withdrawal behind the Vistula and the San was ordered; but it was now too late. This same day the Narev was crossed and the German armour began to

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develop the outer envelopment. The Poznan and Torun armies, now under Kutrzeba, were struggling against encirclement west of Warsaw, and there developed the tremendous battle of the Bzura (or Kutno) which did not end until the 19th when the commander with the remnants of his two armies fought their way back into Warsaw. The battle had scarcely begun before, on September 10th, the Polish commander-in-chief issued his last operational order to withdraw towards the east and south-east. List's advance, against the western and northern outskirts of Lwow, disrupted the new plan, within two days. General Sosnowski who, under it, was now in command of a group including the former Cracow and Carpathian armies with troops brought down from the north, fought a successful engagement, on the 15th, and brushing a panzer division from his path forced his way to the north of Lwow. But on the same day Guderian's armour reached Brest; and two days later the Russians crossed the frontier from north to south and organized fighting was no longer possible. Lwow surrendered to the Russians on the 22nd; Warsaw to Blascowitz six days later when light and water had been cut off by ground and air bombardment, Modlin held out two days longer. There were two fierce battles about Tomaszow (some fifty miles north of Lwow) before another valiant force admitted the inevitable. The gallant resistance on Hel Peninsula only collapsed on October 1st; and General Kleeberg's Polesie group four days later near Kock, some miles north of Lublin. Guerrilla warfare persisted until the following summer; and then, the Poles, after immense losses, transferred their resistance underground and abroad. Poland suffered another partition; and the greatest martyrdom of her troubled history lay ahead.

The Government had, on 19th November 1938, refused a peremptory invitation to join the Anti-Comintern bloc and an ultimatum the following March. It is, therefore, another of the many ironies of the war that Russia should have administered the *coup de grâce*.

People in Britain could not hear of the unprovoked attack

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on Poland unmoved; and yet for some days they were not even at war. It was the exodus of the children from London and the great towns, an event entirely without precedent, that on this gracious autumn day made the international position difficult to contemplate with equanimity. The next day another break with tradition occurred in the unwonted sitting of parliament on Saturday, and the deputy leader of the Opposition marked its unusualness by demanding to know 'How long are we prepared to vacillate at a time when Britain and all that Britain stands for and human civilization are in peril'; and he urged that we should 'march with the French'.

They, in fact, like the British Government were trying to frown down the inevitable. Mr. Chamberlain thought there might be possibilities worth exploring in the suggestion put forward by Signor Mussolini for a Five-Power Conference. On the morning of Sunday, September 3rd, however, the British and French Governments delivered an ultimatum to Herr Hitler requiring him to cease military operations against Poland and leave the country and demanding an answer before eleven o'clock. At eleven-fifteen the Prime Minister broadcast a message to the nation stating that no answer had been received and that, consequently, we were at war. To mark this momentous news there was an air-raid warning. But it proved false, though it was received with much more respect than many real raids later on.

At 6 p.m. that evening the King broadcast a message that placed the struggle on its true plane. 'For the second time in the lives of most of us', he said, 'we are at war. Over and over again we have tried to find a peaceful way out of the differences between ourselves and those who are now our enemies. But it has been vain. We have been forced into a conflict, for we are called, with our Allies, to meet the challenge of a principle which, if it were to prevail, would be fatal to any civilized order in the world.'

'This is the ultimate issue that confronts us. For the sake of all that we ourselves hold dear, and of the world's order and peace, it is unthinkable that we should refuse to meet the challenge. . . .'

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Such was the mood in which Britain entered upon this fateful war. The British fleet had been mobilized on August 31st; and, the following day, the British and French Governments declared general mobilization. A first War Credit of £500 million was passed; and a Bill for Compulsory Military Service between the ages of eighteen and forty-one followed. Two days later Mr. Chamberlain reconstructed his Government. Labour and the Liberals refused to enter it; and the most interesting appointment was that of Mr. Churchill to the Admiralty. But, as we have seen, all this brave show failed to assist the Poles in their struggle. The distribution of leaflets over Germany seemed but to emphasize the Allies' detachment.

Britain, however, was far from inactive. Her warships took up station and set out to perform their historic role: to assure the freedom of the seas to herself and her Allies and deny it to the enemy. In this is implied her immunity from invasion and freedom to invade; to act, in fine, in her traditional way, on a strategy of exterior lines. It was obvious that Germany would counter-attack by a campaign against Britain's communications with the ports which supplied her vital needs. The pocket-battleship was designed for the purpose; and, of course, Germany relied upon her submarines and to some extent upon her bombing aircraft. How the campaign was to be carried out was demonstrated, by accident, as early as September 3rd when an exuberant U-boat commander, against orders, sank the British liner *Athenia*, without warning, 250 miles west of Ireland. While the facts of the incident, in which 112 men, women and children were lost, were in doubt, Hitler accused Mr. Churchill of arranging it to bring America into the war. But no one believed that stupid invention; and the effect on Neutrals caused him to insist upon his orders being carried out.

The main means of coping with the campaign was the convoy system. Merchantmen were armed and became patrolling cruisers. Apparently, in the view of some critics, the warships would have sufficed. But, if the Services had given heed

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to those who thought the aeroplane had no future or to those who thought it alone had a future and the battleship had none, Britain would have been doomed.

Convoys were comparatively immune from attack during the first six months of the war and it was ships sailing individually that fell victim. Coastal Command came increasingly to assist the immunity of convoys nearing the British ports where the U-boats at first lay in wait. Nevertheless the Allied losses by submarine attack were grave enough. By the end of June 1941 no less than 4,605,132 tons of British shipping had been sunk. After the end of 1941 losses by mines fell off sharply, though the magnetic and later the acoustic, mine had, in the first fifteen months of the war, been a serious problem. Losses by surface craft also decreased; but it was not until after 1942 that losses by aircraft fell off.

The U-boat had some expected successes against warships, though the aircraft-carrier *Ark Royal*, sunk by German wireless on 14th September 1939, survived to assist in the destruction of the pride of the German navy, the battleship *Bismarck*, more than eighteen months later. Instead, one of her escort sank the U-boat which made the attempt, U 39, the first German submarine to be destroyed. The aircraft-carrier *Courageous*, however, was sunk on submarine patrol, an ill-judged and costly experiment, in the first month of the war. A much more disturbing incident was the penetration of the anchorage of the main fleet, Scapa Flow, in the Orkneys, in spite of the sunken ships and nets at the entrances not used by the fleet, and the sinking of the battleship *Royal Oak*, on October 14th. On October 27th German air attacks on the fleet bases at Scapa Flow and the Firth of Forth damaged the old battleship *Iron Duke*, two cruisers and a destroyer. With improved anti-aircraft protection that risk was minimized.

Such episodes reflected a little on the navy's efficiency; and this applied, also, to the escape and return of the *Deutschland*. But the Northern Patrol, at first consisting of ten old cruisers and later armed merchantmen, had a hard task to perform. The *Rawalpindi*, one of the latter, was caught on November 23rd, off Iceland, by the battle-cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau*.

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senau and though Captain Kennedy fought until his last gun was out of action, his ship was on fire before she sank; and the retribution planned by the Home Fleet was prevented by darkness and heavy rains.

The battleship *Admiral Graf Spee* was the first capital ship to get through the net, and she sank a number of ships in the Atlantic. The Admiralty at once began to plan its destruction. The battle-cruiser *Renown*, the *Ark Royal* and a number of cruisers and destroyers were, in early December, disposed down the west coast of Africa. At the other side of the Atlantic, at the Falklands, Commodore Harwood, in *Ajax*, had also the cruisers *Exeter* and *Achilles* in the neighbourhood of Rio de Janeiro. The cruiser *Cumberland* was due to join him when, on December 2nd, he heard that the steamer *Doric Star* had been sunk by a pocket battleship off the west coast of Africa and, judging that the next objective would be shipping off South America, he laid his plans to deal with it.

Given equal efficiency on both sides his chances, even of survival, against the pocket battleship, were negligible. Its speed, guns and armour would enable it to destroy the cruisers before they could do it any damage. Harwood had the ghost of a chance if he could force the battleship to divide its fire by attacking from divergent bearings—play terriers to this great mastiff. When, therefore, on the morning of December 13th, the *Admiral Graf Spee* came into view he manœuvred accordingly. The *Graf Spee* was caught between the *Exeter* and the *Ajax* and *Achilles*. And though they were so badly damaged that Harwood broke off the action with the intention of resuming at night when he could close in with less risk, they had so roughly treated the *Graf Spee* that she seized the opportunity to steam full speed for sanctuary in the River Plate.

The *Cumberland* arrived that night and Harwood disposed his ships to meet the *Graf Spee* when she emerged. But at six-fifteen on December 17th, after Captain Langsdorf, thinking he had also the *Ark Royal* and *Renown* to meet, had communicated with Berlin, he steamed out and scuttled his ship some six miles from Montevideo, an inglorious end to his inglorious

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battle. The victory, said Mr. Churchill, came 'like a flash of light and colour on the scene'. Commodore Harwood was knighted and promoted Rear-Admiral, and the three captains received well-merited rewards.

The Allies' sea power cut off Germany's supplies whether they reached her directly or through Neutral ports. She was safe as regards food; for Russia could make good what she did not produce herself. But oil, fats, nitrates, rubber, copper and iron were cut off, as far as was possible, in spite of the usual protests of Neutrals. A strict 'blockade' could not be enforced; but the doctrine of contraband, case law and reprisal (recognized by international law) covered the intricate procedure that was followed.

Though all was not quiet on the Western Front there was little that affected the immediate outlook and nothing that at all disturbed the Germans in Poland. British troops had begun to leave on September 10th for Cherbourg and their stores and vehicles for Brest and Nantes. Lord Gort landed on the 14th with Sir John Dill, commander of the 1st corps, his quartermaster Major-General Lindsell and chief of staff Lieut.-General Pownall. By October 12th the 1st corps was in line; and Major-General Alexander had for partner on his left Major-General Montgomery, commanding the 3rd division. The troops held a stretch of the Belgian frontier from about twenty miles north of Valenciennes to just south of Menin. They were on familiar ground; but they now found an almost continuous tank ditch covered by block houses on their front. Gort set about the organization of three positions in the forward area and from the first week of December gave his troops experience of contact with the enemy by sending them, a brigade at a time, to the Saar area where they were disposed in depth in advance of the Maginot Line. In January it was decided to increase the British force on the Saar and the 51st division relieved the 7th French division on 7th May 1940. By the end of January there were in France two corps each of three divisions, some 222,000 men in all, apart from the Fighter group headquarters, eight wings, Communica-

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tion squadron and administrative troops of the R.A.F. Air Component.

General Gamelin long before this had begun and ended his gesture against the Germans to which he was in honour bound by the Polish Protocol of the preceding May. The French guns penetrated to within easy gun range of the West Wall fortifications. But by that time organized fighting in Poland was at an end; and on September 29th it was decided to withdraw the divisions leaving only outposts in contact with the enemy. On October 16th the Germans attacked and threw the French back on to their own territory; and for the next seven months the Allies ceased even to make the gestures of war. When war broke out there had been between Aachen and Basle only 8 regular (Aktiv) divisions and 32 Reserve and Landwehr divisions, ill-trained, ill-equipped, with the incomplete West Wall between them and the French troops. Even in defence of an Ally, even to seize a golden chance that could never recur, General Gamelin could not bring himself to call the bluff. The Allies who then committed every fault but courage and honour were to be terribly repaid later on.

A serious campaign did, however, disturb this period. Soviet Russia, under the fiction of Mutual Assistance Pacts, had been granted, in turn, by Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania the right to organize sea and air bases on their territories. The last of these agreements was concluded on October 10th; and Russia had thereby secured strong defensive positions on her northern flank.

But the Gulf of Finland was of much more importance to her; and Finland refused to follow the lead of the Baltic countries. On November 30th, therefore, Soviet troops crossed the frontier. Their blows were designed to break through the Mannerheim Line or turn it from the immediate north or from the narrow 'waist' farther north. But although they captured Petsamo, in the extreme north, they suffered defeats at Salla and Suomussalmi and their poor showing fostered baseless hopes in the minds of Finland's admirers. The Finns are

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a highly intelligent, admirable race; and the Allies began to plan their rescue. But when the second battle of the Mannerheim Line on February 1st began it was soon realized that the Allied troops must arrive quickly or they would be too late; and there were difficulties with Finland's neighbours about passing the Allies through their country. Russia very rapidly secured a lodgment in the Mannerheim defences with unremitting attack, drove the Finns to withdraw, and with the capture of Koivisto threatened the ancient city of Viipuri. The position was soon recognized to be hopeless. On March 11th, while the Allies were still awaiting a reply to their offer of help they learned that a Finnish delegation had left for Moscow on March 6th and a week later agreement was reached with the Soviet Government who secured bases at Björko and Hangö. They could now command the Gulf of Finland and the position of Leningrad was safe from interference from the sea.

In the west the war had sunk into a state that deserved the derisive names applied to it—'phoney war' and 'sitzkrieg'; and General Gamelin was heartening his entourage with the assurance, 'In this war the first one who comes out of his shell will be in great danger', which like the famous suggestion of Mr. Chamberlain that Hitler had 'missed the bus' was to be exposed all too ruthlessly all too soon.

The Germans came out of their shell first towards the north when, on April 9th, they invaded Denmark and Norway¹ by sea and air. The former could not offer any open resistance; but Norway was quite another problem. The context of the invasion, however, was completely hidden at the time. During the night of April 7th three British minefields were laid off the Norwegian coast; and at first it was assumed that the German invasion was a prompt reprisal. But it was too prompt; and as a reprisal it could better have been justified by the Anglo-French designs which it anticipated. The German operations, however, had been patiently planned for months. The traitor, Vidkun Quisling, who has added a new term to

¹ See Map 6, p. 104.

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the language of nations, had first proposed the invasion as early as June 1939; and the German naval staff were the first to adopt it. Hitler was for some time unresponsive; but by January 27th the idea was committed to Keitel and on March 1st Hitler signed the directive. He was no doubt moved to this decision by the control which Russia had secured over the Gulf of Finland and the inner Baltic. If Russia was to insure herself there he, no doubt, thought it well to seize control over the outer gate of the Baltic.

The British action in sowing minefields had no part in his decision. Still less had the action against the *Altmark*. This vessel had been one of the supply ships of the *Graf Spee* and in the end had been used as a prison for the crews of destroyed British merchantmen. In spite of careful search she was not discovered until February 15th when she was seen making her way into Norwegian territorial waters. On the approach of H.M.S. *Intrepid* she took refuge in Jösing Fjord, at the south-western extremity of Norway. Captain P. L. Vian in H.M.S. *Cossack*, in spite of the assurance that the *Altmark* had been twice examined in the Norwegian ports, sent a boarding party which took over the vessel and liberated 299 officers and men.

The minefields were laid to prevent the carriage to Germany through Norwegian territorial waters of the iron ore upon which she depended so much. The Norwegian Government at once issued a solemn protest; but this was forgotten almost as soon as it was issued in the news of the German invasion which fell upon Norway like a thunderbolt. In less than twelve hours the Germans were masters of Oslo and all the most important ports—Kristiansand, Arendal, Egersund, Stavanger, Bergen, Trondheim and Narvik—and of all the airfields. The most spirited resistance was shown everywhere, except at Narvik. Especially was this the case at Horten, in the outer Oslo Fjord and the fortress Oscarsburg, in the more northerly narrows of the Fjord. The German cruiser *Blücher* was sunk, and the cruiser *Emden* was seriously damaged. The *Karlsruhe* was sunk by a British submarine in the same area. But troops were landed at Horten and at Moss, on the east

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side of Oslo Fjord, and moved on the capital by road, while others were landing from the air. It was the latter, landed at Fornebu, outside Oslo, who first entered the capital. At Bergen, a German transport was in harbour carrying troops and supplies; and there were merchantmen, similarly equipped in other harbours. It was off Bergen that Fleet Air Arm and the R.A.F. sank a third cruiser, *Königsberg*. In Narvik, the warships *Norge* and *Eidsvold* were both sunk in attempting to prevent the Germans entering the fjord; but British destroyers sank nine merchantmen and two destroyers, and damaged one other, for the loss of *Hunter* and *Hardy* and severe damage to two others. Vice-Admiral Whitworth in the battleship *Warspite* with nine destroyers made amends three days later by destroying the whole of the German force; but by that time the shore and land defences had been surrendered.

Meanwhile British ships had been in action with the battle-cruisers *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* and the heavy cruiser *Hipper* which were covering the invasion. The destroyer *Glowworm*, though alone, in a hopeless position, attacked and tore a hole in the bows of *Hipper*; and before she was sunk contrived to warn the Home Fleet; but the battle-cruiser *Renown* was only able to exchange shots with the two German battleships before they escaped in the mist.

The British naval actions at Narvik had shown that the Allies were not disposed to allow Norway to be overrun if they could help it. They could not ignore the appeal of Neutrals attacked by surprise; but, if they should intervene, they would do so under the gravest handicap. They must do so on a hastily improvised plan, with no, or insufficient, knowledge of the Neutral's plan of defence and with no properly concerted scheme of co-operation. They must risk the possibility of their assistance being ineffective and of serious danger, both moral and military, to their own position.

But no one can have expected that in Norway so little would be achieved. Trondheim was the key to at least the northern half of the country. If that were captured, Narvik could be taken at leisure; and the Allies, recognizing the position, and planning to seize Trondheim, failed to take the

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steps necessary to implement their plan. They landed at Namsos small British and French contingents under Major-General Carton de Wiart and a Territorial and regular brigade at Andalnes under Major-General Paget. As General Paget had to make some attempt to hold the Germans advancing from the south, while pushing forward to Storen, on the way to Trondheim, the main weight of the converging movement fell on the force at Namsos which must come within range of German warships in the fjord fifty miles north of Trondheim. Indeed, when the troops actually advanced that distance, they had been for some time under these guns and had found a German force landed in their rear. They had no guns, tanks, aircraft or anti-aircraft guns; and their position was untenable. How different it would have been if, simultaneously with the advance from north and south—which, after all, were planned as diversionary—there had been a direct attack from the sea. For no satisfactory reason so far advanced the naval attack was abandoned and, deprived of it, the Allied plan inevitably foundered.

Paget's small force came into contact with the Germans in the Gudbrand's valley, at Lillehammer, on April 20th, and held the position for two days. But already the Allies were fighting on the retreat. The Norwegians had only proclaimed general mobilization on the morning of the 9th and never had the chance to exert their full force. But the enemy would have made greater headway in the Gudbrand's valley but for the attack of the Norwegians from Voss at Tonsaasen which held up the Germans for four days.

The British troops after holding the Germans for two days at Kvam fell back to fight another heavy action at Otta, seven miles to the north, on April 28th. They checked the German advance and were then withdrawn by train to Dombas. But by this time progress had carried the enemy up the Oster valley towards the Trondheim garrison in the area of Storen, which they reached on April 30th; and the next day the British force was being evacuated from Andalnes. During the whole of this time they had been under constant air attack. The squadron landed on the ice-covered lake near

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Dombas had fought magnificently, though many of their machines were destroyed on the ice; and the struggle was not abandoned until their last machine was destroyed. The aerodromes about Trondheim which might so easily have been seized by direct attack would have saved the situation.

The later operations against Narvik were only a *pis aller*, although Lieut.-General Auchinleck took the town on May 27th. It was known even then that the Allies were to be withdrawn; and the evacuation of the 27,000 troops—British, French and Poles—proceeded with practically no interference from the air, between June 3rd and 8th. The King and the Norwegian Government left from Tromso, in the cruiser *Devonshire*. During the withdrawal the aircraft-carrier *Glorious* and her attendant destroyers *Acasta* and *Ardent* were attacked and sunk by the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau* and *Hipper*, accompanied by two destroyers. They had, earlier on the same day, sunk an oiler with a trawler escort and the (empty) troopship *Orana*. On the moral, military and strategic side, the balance sheet of the Norwegian operations was bad.

This was made plain in the House of Commons on May 7th when the Government secured a technical acquittal but on terms that implied a moral condemnation. Neither Britain nor France could be content with the manner in which the Allies had played their parts. M. Reynaud was so disturbed that he proposed to dismiss General Gamelin. M. Daladier saved him, perhaps at the cost of his country's downfall. But in the debate Mr. Churchill made clear that it was the Chiefs of Staff who had decided against the direct attack on Trondheim as being more costly and less sure than the 'diversionary landings'; and how was Gamelin involved in that? The debate ended on May 8th; and on May 10th the political battle was completely overshadowed by the German invasion of Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg. Mr. Chamberlain resigned that evening and Mr. Churchill became Prime Minister.

The new Government contained representatives of Labour and both branches of the Liberal party. Mr. Attlee, as Lord Privy Seal, and Mr. Arthur Greenwood, Minister without

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Portfolio, became members of the inner War Cabinet, with Mr. Chamberlain, Lord President of the Council, and Lord Halifax, Foreign Secretary. Of the five members only Lord Halifax had departmental duties. Sir Kingsley Wood became Chancellor of the Exchequer and Mr. Hugh Dalton, Minister of Economic Warfare. But the most interesting new appointments were Lord Beaverbrook, who was made responsible for Aircraft Production and played no insignificant part in preparing the victory in the battle of Britain; Lord Woolton, Minister of Food, who achieved a remarkable success in feeding the people adequately; Sir John Reith, Minister of Transport; Sir Andrew Duncan, President of the Board of Trade; Sir John Anderson, Home Secretary and Minister of Home Security; and Mr. Ernest Bevin, Minister of Labour and National Service. The last named was among those not before associated with politics and he was far from being the least successful of the new team.

The new Government, on May 13th, secured a vote of confidence which was unanimous except for the two members of the Independent Labour Party; and Mr. Churchill began that series of inspiring speeches that made him the symbol and expression of the nation's will. He said he had nothing to offer but 'blood and toil and tears and sweat' and then went on, 'If you ask us "What is your aim?", I can answer in one word, victory, victory at all costs, victory in spite of all terrors, victory however long and hard the road may be. For without victory there is no survival—and let that be realized—no survival for the British Empire, no survival for all that the British Empire has stood for, no survival for the urge and impulse of the ages that mankind shall move forward towards its goal.'

In a shorter time than anyone could have imagined survival became an imminent issue. The scope and nature of the attack came as a complete surprise. The Schlieffen Plan was never far from the German Staff's mind, but it obsessed the French; and the opening moves of the attack seemed to justify their hopes and fears. But the reality was very different. In-



2. The Campaign in the West

stead of the brusque sweep through Belgium which Gamelin anticipated, the main blow was to be delivered through the hilly, forested Ardennes covering the approach to the Meuse between Namur and Sedan. It was thought by the Allies unsuitable for the deployment of any considerable force, particularly of armour; and Manstein, Rundstedt's chief of staff, had pointed out the advantage of profiting by this illusion. While the Allies adhered to the Dyle Plan, a break through across the Meuse into the Oise valley offered the chance of a mass envelopment of the entire Allied left.

The German attack was carried out by three army groups under General von Bock, General von Rundstedt and General von Leeb with 150 divisions; and it is important to recog-

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nize that, in numbers, the Allies were little if at all inferior.¹ The French had 106 divisions, the British 13, the Belgians 20 and the Dutch the equivalent of 10. But whereas the German army was a coherent whole, equipped to develop tremendous momentum and with a strong core of experienced troops, the Allies were a coalition of inexperienced national armies, inferior in equipment, with no common military doctrine and tradition, and with inferior liaison and command.

General von Bock's group 'B' comprised the 18th army of General von Küchler, whose role was the swift liquidation of the Dutch resistance, and the 6th of General von Reichenau which operated on Küchler's left and dealt with the Liége defences. The Dutch Field army consisted of 4 army corps each of two divisions, a Light division of cyclists and horse artillery, 24 brigades of older levies, 24 frontier battalions, 14 regiments of army artillery and several detachments. There were few anti-aircraft guns and only 11 squadrons of aircraft, 5 of them co-operation squadrons. Küchler's army was a wholly modern formation of picked troops containing an armoured division, an air division and a regiment of paratroops. In all but numbers it was superior to the Dutch garrison which was committed to the defence of frontiers with no natural obstacles and which were much too long for anything beyond delaying actions. The main line of defence was the 'Valley' position—the Gelder valley, the basin of the Eem and the Grift, with the extension in the Peel position to the south. Beyond the Valley position lay 'Fortress Holland' with its eastern face stretching from Muiden by Breukelen, Utrecht and Goringhem to the southern water front. It was provided with modern casemates at road crossings and could be flooded over its entire length.

The Germans planned to outflank 'Fortress Holland' from

¹ The Allied numbers have been variously given, though the total was, as nearly as possible, equal to that of the Germans. There are certainly 13 (3 incompletely trained) British divisions mentioned in Gort's second despatch as in France in May 1940, the 5th being on the French front. The Belgian Staff give 22 divisions as their strength. The French numbers are given as 80 in addition to 26 in the Maginot Line.

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north and south while striking at its heart. They reached the fort at Kornwerderzand, at the Friesland end of the Zuyder Zee, on May 11th but failed to take it. So far the north was safe. But when the advanced section of an armoured division reached Moerdijk, on the 12th, the southern defences were penetrated; and the rest was anti-climax. For already the defence was reeling under the air attack within the 'Fortress'. Between Leyden and Moerdijk parachutists were dropped in the early hours of May 10th and airborne troops followed. One strong force landed at the Hague and, though most of the neighbouring airfields were recovered in bitter fighting, the 1st corps, the strategic reserve, was immobilized. By night Rotterdam south of the Meuse, the island of Ysselmonde and the greater part of the island of Dordrecht with the two Moerdijk bridges were in German hands. Moreover the 'Fifth Column' proved a disturbing actuality at the Hague. The 7th French army had arrived; but it failed to block the way to the southern front of 'Fortress Holland'.

The Valley position was penetrated at Rhenen by nightfall on the 12th; and a gallant attempt to restore the position on the following day led to the withdrawal of the troops. The German armour had linked up with the airborne troops south of Rotterdam and the end was near. The Royal family had left for England, followed by the Government; and destroyers had taken off the composite battalion of Irish and Welsh Guards and 200 Marines sent to hold the Hook of Holland. Capitulation could not be delayed more than a few days. But the Germans were in a hurry and they bombed Rotterdam mercilessly with a threat to treat other cities in the same way. Faced with such a prospect, the Dutch commander-in-chief surrendered on May 14th. The resistance in Zeeland lasted a few days longer and then Holland entered upon her long agony.

But by this time the whole campaign in the west was fatally compromised, though the realization only came by degrees. The Allied concentration on the right of the Belgian forces on the Dyle from Louvain through Wavre and thence covering

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the Gembloux Gap to Namur and south along the Meuse to the Maginot Line had been punctually carried out. Little interference was encountered from the Luftwaffe or from refugees.

On the 11th, however, the Belgian army had begun to withdraw to the Antwerp-Louvain position. Half of the air force had been destroyed on the ground in the opening hours of the war; and the assault on the Albert canal and the Meuse between Liège and Maastricht followed entirely novel lines. The centre of the northern sector was the fortified area of Liège; but the Albert canal, which flanked it, was breached all too easily. The powerful fort of Eben Emael, perched about twenty-seven yards above the surrounding country, covered the nearer bridges of the canal. But on May 10th gliders daringly landed on its flat roof and, while the defenders were vainly struggling against a form of attack for which they were wholly unprepared, parachutists and glider-borne troops were landed east of the bridges the fort was designed to cover. The officer in charge of the demolition of the bridges at Veldwezeldt and Vroenhaven was shot from the rear. Another officer penetrated to the mine chamber and destroyed the Veldwezeldt and himself with it; and the other bridge was heroically destroyed later by the R.A.F. But the damage had already been done. A footing had been gained across the canal on the 11th and the German armour began to cross and fan out between Hasselt and Tongres.

General Prioux's 1st cavalry corps, of General Blanchard's 1st French army, checked the German armour at St. Trond and became heavily engaged in advance of the unfinished 'Perwez Line' until it was withdrawn behind the main force of Blanchard's army now standing in advance of the Gembloux Gap. Its powerful and skilful artillery held the German attack on May 14th; but, between the armies of Reichenau and Kluge, Blanchard was too heavily engaged to assist the two weakest of the French field armies, General Corap's 9th and General Huntziger's 2nd, upon which the main blow of the German armour had fallen with astonishing results.

Between Aachen and the Moselle Rundstedt's group 'A'

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disposed of four armies: the 4th of General von Kluge, the 12th of General von List, General von Kleist's group from Monthermé to Sedan, and the 16th of General von Busch from Sedan to the Moselle. General von Leeb's group 'C' had the role of containing the Maginot sector and, apart from an attack on the sector nearest Sedan, during the critical assault on the Meuse, did not figure in the main battles.

The armies of Corap and Huntziger were as weak in quality as in number and yet they were the guardians of the strip of the Meuse which is the door of the Oise valley, the main route of invasion from the north. Corap was left to hold the sixty miles between Namur and Mezières with a wholly inadequate force. Huntziger was relatively stronger and half of his front was covered by the Maginot defences. To such a paradox was the obsession with the defensive reduced in action. Gamelin's dispositions could have been justified if his reserves had been sufficiently near and mobile to intervene in case of need.

But, although the stout Belgian frontier defence and Huntziger's cavalry held up Kleist the greater part of the first day, the French were compelled to fall back on the 11th and, under cover of dive-bomber attacks, the Germans followed across the unblown bridge of the Semois. Both Corap and Huntziger had appealed for reinforcements and the orders were promptly issued; but the pace of their movement was not adjusted to modern war. The Germans were at the Meuse from Namur to Sedan; and defences, though stubbornly held, began to give way on May 13th. General Rommel's 7th armoured division crossed the river in the mist of the following morning about Houx, in spite of the heavy destruction of the assault boats by the Dinant guns. Meanwhile Reinhhardt and Guderian had effected a crossing at several places from Monthermé to Sedan; and about the latter place the Germans had begun to shake themselves free of the defences at midnight on the 14th. About Sedan Guderian compelled the withdrawal of Huntziger's left, turned west and overran the reserve division and Spahi brigade which Corap had thrown in to fill the

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gap. His front was already disintegrating; and on the morning of the 15th he decided to fall back from the Meuse. In a few days he was dismissed, the scapegoat for faults at a higher level. Giraud, sent to take his place, was unable to build the islets of resistance into a breakwater. A front no longer existed. The one spirited attempt to check the German advance to the west was made on the 17th, by General de Gaulle with the new and untrained 4th armoured division, north-east of Laon. It had some success; but on the following night Giraud ran into a German patrol and was taken prisoner, and after that the 9th army faded away.

The break through was complete on May 15th, and that night Gamelin ordered the general retreat from Belgium. The Belgian and British armies fell back through roads crowded by refugees terror-stricken by German bombing; and already darker vistas loomed ahead. Gort's rear headquarters at Arras, and his communications over the Somme at Amiens and Abbeville, were threatened by the German advance. Gamelin seems to have lost his head. When he informed M. Reynaud of his fears for Paris, Weygand was at once summoned from Syria and made commander-in-chief. He arrived on the 19th; but the day before, the Germans were at Amiens, and on the evening of the 20th, they were in Abbeville, at the mouth of the Somme.

General Ironside that morning, on the direction of the Cabinet, urged Gort to move south and take station on the left of the French. By that time it was wholly impracticable; but, on the following day he made a sortie towards the south and, although Major-General Martel's force received only token assistance from the French it administered a sharp check. The later moves by the French, on Cambrai from the north and from Roye in the south achieved nothing of moment; and they marked the end of all hope of reuniting the north and south. The time had passed. The German armour had isolated Boulogne by the evening of the 22nd and was only nine miles from Calais. The next day the last R.A.F. landing-ground at Merville was evacuated. The British troops were on half rations. Brigadier Fox was fighting his last hours at

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Boulogne before his withdrawal to England; and the Belgians were engaged in their last battle.

The Germans opened a heavy attack on their positions on the Lys and it gathered violence as during the next three days it was extended to the north. The line was repeatedly broken. The hospitals were full. The supply of shells was failing. Refugees wandered about hopelessly behind the front. It was under such circumstances that at 5 p.m. the King decided to ask for an armistice; and on the following day, May 28th, the Belgian army surrendered unconditionally. It is, of course, untrue that he was betrayed by the British as his statement issued in the autumn of 1949 suggests but incidentally disproves. And, of course, he asked for an armistice without consulting the Allies. His justification is better based on the facts as set forth above. The King passed into the keeping of the Germans with between 300,000 and 400,000 weary and dispirited troops. His Government's determination to continue the struggle provided the Allies with footholds in Africa of great material and strategic importance.

'Operation Dynamo', the formal evacuation operation, had been launched two days earlier. Until that evening Brigadier Nicholson's defence of Calais held up two armoured divisions. The following evening Gort, already informed that his 'sole task' was to evacuate the maximum possible force to England, learned of the Belgian request for an armistice and suddenly found himself faced with a gap of twenty miles between Ypres and the sea. He had made preliminary dispositions on his left flank and Brigadier Lawson had succeeded in manning the Dunkirk perimeter along the canals between Nieuport and Bergues where Fagalde's troops extended the line to Gravelines. Under skilful rearguard actions the troops fell back within the perimeter as others were evacuated; and the numbers taken to England steadily grew. On May 29th it was 38,000 and on June 1st it reached the astonishing figure of 61,998. After the end of the war, Rundstedt stated that it was a mere 'blunder' of Hitler that permitted the evacuation;

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'with the shortage of armour and difficult country (i.e. flooded ground) Hitler decided that the cost of an attack would be too high, when the French armies to the south had not yet been destroyed'.¹ Other and less likely suggestions have been made from the German side to explain why that which the communiqués were anticipating never came about.

When the troops came within the Dunkirk perimeter the R.A.F. were able to intervene; and though the men lying about on the dunes, under constant bombing, complained that they saw no British aircraft the result would have been very different without them. On May 29th British fighters repeatedly broke up formations of enemy fighters and bombers, while bombers persistently attacked enemy columns, panzer units, bridges and guns. Gort shut down his headquarters on the evening of May 31st, handed over command to General Alexander and left for England. At midnight on June 2nd General Alexander and Captain Tennant satisfied themselves that no British troops were left on shore and then also left for England. By that time the number of those evacuated totalled 337,131, of whom 112,546 were Allies.

It was an astonishing achievement; and it was only made possible by the enthusiastic co-operation of 665 craft of all sorts and sizes. The volunteer fleet made journey after journey across waters that were covered almost continuously by enemy bombers to reach the troops who at times waited hours waist-deep in the sea. The navy took the motley brood under its wing and with 222 vessels did as usual more than its share. Its loss—seven destroyers and twenty-four minor craft—was not high for such an operation.

The balance sheet cannot omit this remarkable exhibition of morale. But there were some 30,000 British soldiers killed, wounded and missing; and all the equipment was lost. The French casualties were very much higher. The Allies had suffered a terrible disaster. The 'miracle of deliverance' as Mr. Churchill aptly called it, could not offset that, though it cast upon it some warm redeeming light. It had seemed that the internal combustion engine ruled the war. At Dunkirk the

¹ Quoted from *Defeat in the West* by Milton Shulman, p. 43.

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stout heart and the resolute will came into their own as, in the end, they always must.

On June 4th Germany announced her casualties as 10,252 killed, 42,533 wounded and 8,463 missing. It was in fact a much cheaper victory than contemporary British estimates claimed. Even if these figures, issued with such astonishing promptitude, do not carry complete conviction, the Germans secured an immense prize at a bargain price.

It is difficult to convey the quality of these days. No one knew what the morrow might bring forth. The results could be seen without any understanding of how they came about. So when May 26th, the day of national prayer, dawned bewilderment was beginning to merge into dismay; and the surrender of the Belgian army opened up vistas of disaster. In comparison Dunkirk wore the colour of victory; though, in fact, the curtain had been rung down on the campaign in the west. For if the Belgian, British and entire French army could not withstand the German attack, how could less than half the number? As early as May 25th, Weygand is stated to have informed the French Cabinet, 'France committed the enormous mistake of going into war without the *matériel* and the military doctrine it should have had'. That went almost to the root of the matter; but it could not be changed now, and it was an epitaph.

Already the roads of France were packed with that most pitiful of all sights, a nation on the move with all that seemed portable and desirable to carry. Paris had been able to swallow such a stream without disorganization. It was otherwise with the smaller towns and villages; and during the battle of France the splendid national roads began to fill with the stream of moving humanity. By June 8th, south of the Marne, they were clogged with the refugees. Women with children driving refractory sheep, goats or cattle before them; old men driving carts piled with household furniture; old and young, on foot, on bicycles, in cars, began to compete with the military traffic. Stations at the wayside had platforms filled with milling crowds of people waiting for

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trains, a terribly inviting target which the German bomber did not ignore.

It was in such conditions that the battle of France took place. The German bombardment opened at dawn on June 5th on the sector of the French front between the Laon-Soissons road and the sea which was based on the Aisne and the Somme. But the Somme was already compromised by the German bridgeheads at Abbeville, which de Gaulle had unsuccessfully tried to destroy some days before, at Amiens and Peronne. Weygand had outlined the appropriate tactics for a defence in depth; but his few shaken divisions could not be expected to withstand the weight of the attack. The bombardment was followed by dive-bombing and then the German armour; and even on the Peronne sector the Germans reached a point within fourteen miles of Compiègne on June 6th, though the French fought there as stubbornly as ever in their history, holding up the infantry miles behind the spearheads of the advance. On the extreme left the position was much worse. The 51st division set to hold no less than sixteen miles was forced back to the Bresle, fifteen miles to the south. On the 7th, when signs of collapse were beginning to appear on many parts of the front, the 5th and 7th panzer divisions headed off the 9th French corps, which included the 51st division, into the Rouen-Dieppe cul-de-sac. Rouen was captured on the next day in spite of Sir Henry Carslake's improvised defence and, efforts to evacuate them failing, some 6,000 men of the 51st division with the rest of the 9th corps were taken prisoner.

But by this time the three armies between the sea and Neufchâtel had been ordered to fall back on the Paris defences, and the second phase of the battle had opened. The attack fell, on June 9th, mainly on the upper Aisne. The line of the Seine was already giving way. Mussolini showed how the battle was going by declaring war on Britain and France on June 10th, he had no mind for risks. The Germans, indeed, reached Château Thierry, on the Marne, on the following day; they had crossed the Seine, though in front of Paris

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there was still some resistance. On this day Mr. Churchill, with Mr. Eden and Sir John Dill, met M. Reynaud, Pétain and Weygand at Briare; and though it was stated that complete agreement had been reached, all that can be gathered is the impression that in Weygand's opinion all was lost. The Government left Paris, after declaring it an open town; and something went with that abandonment.

The next day was the last of organized fighting. The 7th and 10th armies abandoned their positions in defence of Paris and Weygand, anticipating the worst, ordered the general retreat to the south; and the rest degenerated into pursuit. By this time an unending procession of cars, coaches and lorries, bicycles and handcarts flowed steadily along the roads hampering the military operations. At some places over-loaded vehicles broke down and blocked the road. At others people were camping out; but, whatever their action, they had now become, as in the case of Belgium, a handicap on the retreating troops. Civilian cars disputed the right of way with military vehicles. Some villages through which the stream of refugees had passed were as if they had been cleaned out by a swarm of locusts; some were like madhouses, with soldiers and civilians shouting across an almost immovable mass of all kinds of vehicles.

It was in such an atmosphere that, when Mr. Churchill, with Lord Halifax and Lord Beaverbrook, met M. Reynaud on June 13th he was asked if Britain would release France from her engagement not to open separate negotiations for an armistice; and he could only refuse. Sir Alan Brooke had taken command of all the British troops then in France—some 150,000 of them—but in effect his role resolved itself into arranging for their evacuation. The 4th German army was moving to attack in the direction of Cherbourg and Brest before the Canadians embarked on the 16th. The rest of the troops with the bulk of their equipment were embarked on the afternoon of the 18th.

Meanwhile, early on the morning of the 14th, the Germans

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entered Paris and, later in the day, the Government left Tours for Bordeaux. There were still islands of resistance; but, as a French general said, it was more like guerrilla warfare. The next day the Germans 'broke through' the Maginot Line under conditions that still leave its strength, when adequately fought, an open question. On June 16th Mr. Churchill informed M. Reynaud that, if the French fleet were sent to British ports, while negotiations with Germany were being carried on, the British Government would agree that the French might ask for an armistice. Later in the day General de Gaulle, who had been acting as liaison between Paris and London, informed M. Reynaud that the British Government were prepared to offer France an Act of Union between the two countries; but the unprecedented offer was never fairly considered. Reynaud was only interested in help which neither Britain nor America could give.

That night he resigned. Pétain became Prime Minister and at once asked Señor Lequerica, the Spanish Ambassador, to remit his request for an armistice to Hitler and then, inexplicably, ordered the 'cease fire'. The result was such as might have been expected. Hitler took advantage of the situation to exact a dramatic revenge. At Compiègne, in the very carriage in which Foch had handed the armistice terms to the defeated Germans, the French plenipotentiaries were compelled to listen to a long statement read by General Keitel, in the presence of Hitler, Brauchitsch, Göring, Raeder and Hess—and were then handed the terms. They included the occupation of France north and west of a line joining Geneva, Dole, Châlons-sur-Saône, Paray-le-Monial, Moulins, Bourges, Vierzon, thence to twenty kilometres east of Tours, thence south parallel to Angoulême railway to Mont de Marsan and St. Jean Pied de Port. The French fleet, on paper at least, was still safe. Mussolini, on June 24th, presented another set of terms.

France fell because she had lost the heart to survive as a Great Power. She had entered the war half-hearted; she left it with no heart in the war at all. And then her heart began to beat again. The occupation sowed the seeds of resistance;

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and Germany was to foster them, later on, by the blunder of attacking Russia.

In England General de Gaulle raised the banner of defiance; and Britain became more obviously the centre of the resistance to German plans. In England there were soon representatives of all the nations at war. French and Belgian fishermen arrived, shortly after Dunkirk, in small craft loaded beyond capacity with men, women and children and such movables as could be got away. In the ports Neutrals and Allies brushed shoulders. There were many Norwegians. There were Czechs and Dutch and, of course, thousands of Poles. They took root and established Lycées, Gymnasiums and Athenaeums. The Poles took hold of the Air Force and contributed 15,000 to it. Considerable areas in southern Scotland became Polish settlements. These guests settled down and added something to the recognition that it was a European war of which Britain was the outpost and that it was their and Britain's mission to relieve the incalculable misery into which Germany had plunged the Continent. And finally there were the Americans, only a shining trickle at first; and then a mighty flood.

Britain had no time to live down the shock of Dunkirk and the fall of France before a new peril rose above the horizon—invansion. The idea was monstrous and almost incredible. But, when the first order was issued to the German troops to be ready, the preparations for Operation 'Sea-Lion' were already well under way; and on September 3rd the High Command provisionally fixed the date for September 21st. The invasion barges were being assembled in the Channel ports in July.

The plan only became known many years later. Field-Marshal von Rundstedt, who had played the leading part in Poland and in northern France, was to invade with Army Group 'A', the XVI and IX Armies which were to embark from Ostend, Calais and Boulogne and from Dieppe, Havre and Caen respectively. The XVI Army was to land in Kent and Sussex between Margate and Hastings; the IX between

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Brighton and Portsmouth, in Sussex and Hampshire. Airborne troops were to clear the exits from Romney Marshes, the defiles of the South Downs and other key-points in the Brighton bridgehead.

When Group 'A' had attracted the central reserves to the bridgehead, defined by a line from Tilbury to Southampton Water through Caterham, Leatherhead and Aldershot, Group 'B', the reinforced VI Army, was to embark from the Cherbourg Peninsula and land west of Bournemouth and Weymouth Bay. The two groups would attain a line between Colchester and Bristol, London would be encircled and mopped up, and powerful mobile forces would be sent to overrun the industrial areas of the Midlands, South Wales, Lancashire and Yorkshire, and occupy the main ports.

The invasion would be launched by about the same force as was used on D-day in Normandy and the total force available was thirty-nine divisions.

What would have happened if that force had landed while the British army remained to be re-equipped? Mr. Churchill had splendidly declared on June 4th, 'We shall defend our island whatever the cost may be. We shall fight on the beaches; we shall fight on the landing-grounds; we shall fight in the fields and in the streets; we shall fight in the hills. We shall never surrender. . . .' But we have seen in Poland what the German army could do against a semi-defenceless enemy. The ironic spirit, however, presided over the whole of this episode. Rundstedt put the defence force available at seventeen divisions with twenty-two in the London area as operational reserve!

But even Weygand admitted that Britain has a formidable tank ditch, and the German navy had no force comparable with the British even in home waters; and, as Jodl said much later, Germany dare not risk invasion 'as long as the British Air Force had not been completely beaten'. The R.A.F. battle with the Luftwaffe, therefore, became the Battle of Britain; but how it began and the shape it assumed was not appreciated at the time. The bombers began to deal with the invasion barges in July; and as the Channel ports were easy

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targets, even on a moonless night, the bomber stations shared them out and identified the kill by photographs taken by day.

The preliminary phase of the Battle of Britain overlapped this vital counteraction. It began, little noticed, on July 10th and extended until August 7th. The numbers engaged were comparatively small and the attacks, directed on coastal targets and convoys, intermittent. The Germans lost 192 aircraft. It was four less than was estimated and Air Chief Marshal Dowding, the Air Officer commanding-in-chief the Fighter Command, had not expected the estimate to be so accurate. But in the main battles the losses were much lower than the estimates; and it was another of the ironies of the war that the morale of pilots and people, in this crucial battle, was sustained by the thought of the immense losses inflicted on the enemy, losses that were, in fact, imaginary.

Number Eleven group which bore the brunt of the battle, under Air Vice-Marshal Park, comprised twenty-three squadrons on July 8th and the establishment was never much higher. But, before the battle ended, the fighting strength could only be maintained by bringing in squadrons from as far north as Caithness and pilots from the Fleet Air Arm, Bomber Command and Coastal Command. One Czech and two Polish squadrons were engaged in the battle and also a squadron of Canadian pilots under the gallant Bader.

In the early engagements of the first phase of the main attack dive-bombers, Junkers 88 and 87 with Dorniers were pitted against Spitfires, Hurricanes and, occasionally, Defiants; and they were later accompanied by Me 110 and Me 109. On August 15th men and women of south-east England saw mass attacks against the summer sky; and in the evening the Germans flew in to Croydon. They lost seventy-six aircraft; and that figure was never exceeded in any single day. Three days later, in a second engagement, three mass raids were made and, for the first time, the anti-aircraft guns of London went into action. The battle died down somewhat after that; but by August 23rd, when the first phase ended, the Germans had lost 595 aircraft and 204 were damaged. It was on August 20th that Mr. Churchill used the memorable

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words 'Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few'.

The defence had already suffered considerable damage and casualties. Three advanced fighter stations were temporarily abandoned and three radio-location stations were damaged. But the second phase, which lasted fourteen days, developed greater violence. The average daily German loss was twenty-seven, slightly higher than in the first phase; and on one occasion—the only one—the R.A.F. lost a greater number of aircraft than the Germans.

So, with more of their purpose attained, the Luftwaffe entered upon the third phase—the attack on London. It began with the afternoon attack of September 7th and lasted until the end of the month. In this attack, carried out mainly by heavy bombers and an equal number of fighters, the congested area on both banks of the Thames bore the brunt; and the heavy damage and casualties first brought the reality of the battle home to London. Fires and destruction began to appear in many places. Traffic was greatly disturbed. The machine creaked rather badly. Some of the history and beauty of London disappeared.

Later on, an American sympathizer wrote that Germany had beaten Britain at this time but did not know it. But, at the end of the phase, the battle was at an end; at an end, too, the idea of invasion. Although the attacks continued during the whole of October, with London as the main objective, this was a 'break-off' phase. On October 12th Keitel issued an Order from Hitler's headquarters 'that from now on until the spring, preparations for landing in England will be maintained purely as a military and political threat'. The Luftwaffe had lost 1,733 aircraft (not 2,692 as was estimated) and 643 damaged. But the R.A.F. and the fighter aerodromes with their communications had suffered very serious damage. Few squadrons 'were fresh and intact. . . . Luckily the Germans did not realize the success of their objectives and shifted them before the cumulative effect had become apparent to them.'¹

¹ Dowding's Despatch, 20th August 1941; published 10th September 1946.

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Hitler, indeed, had never thought out the problem for reducing Britain though he recognized her as his main enemy. When the time came for invasion neither the sea transport nor adequate naval escort was available. There was not even a sufficiently numerous Luftwaffe to bear the inevitable wastage. The R.A.F. lost 375 pilots and 358 were wounded. There were 1,700 people killed in the day attacks, 12,581 in the more persistent night raids. But, at the end, the A.A. guns were still inflicting loss and the fighters were meeting the Germans as if their numbers were inexhaustible. This magnificent defiance, their most brilliant victory, compelled second thoughts. Hitler turned his eyes to the east.

The Luftwaffe was allowed to exercise itself in a period of night raids which sowed destruction over the country. This phase continued until the following May; and no one who did not live through it can imagine what this long succession of night raids meant. Some of the scenes it produced might have been apt illustrations of Dante's Inferno. The widespread fires, the crashing buildings and the torn, burned and ruined bodies that were taken from humble homes can never be adequately described by human pen. The raid on Coventry gave Germany a new term; but the cumulative effect of the repeated attacks on London was even more terrible. Historic buildings dissolved into rubble. Fine churches became bare walls. And yet, through all this terrible onslaught, the people, even those who were its victims, demonstrated a patience, a humour and a courage of which even they never suspected themselves capable—perhaps they least of all. It was a period of tragic and terrible splendour for something infinitely finer emerged from the ruins.

It was when the Battle of Britain was finally dying down that the Mediterranean theatre suddenly came to life. On October 28th Italy presented an ultimatum to Greece and, on its rejection, at once crossed the frontier from Albania. Greece appealed for help to Britain, who on April 13th 1939 had guaranteed her independence; and she was promised all possible support.

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Up to this time the navy had been exercising its right of 'visit and search' with, from December 1939, France responsible for the western Mediterranean from Gibraltar to Malta. Contraband bases had been established; and except for coastal traffic little escaped the Allied net. The Mediterranean route, however, had to be closed in May 1940; and, when France ordered the 'cease fire', the British commander-in-chief, Admiral Cunningham, found himself confronted with a delicate problem in the presence of a French squadron with his fleet at Alexandria. Fortunately, after discussion, Admiral Godefroi demilitarized his squadron and most of the personnel were repatriated. It was hoped that the units at Oran and Dakar would agree to some similar arrangement; but when the issue was presented to Admiral Gensoul at Oran by Admiral Somerville, on July 3rd, he refused the alternatives offered and the tragic order to 'Open fire' had to be given. The battle-cruiser *Strasbourg* managed to escape, damaged, to Toulon; and the other ships were placed *hors de combat*. On July 7th the same unhappy sequence of events was repeated at Dakar. On September 23rd, a Free French force, under a wholly unfounded impression, tried to land there; and the supporting British squadron was damaged, a tragi-comedy which Britain might well have been spared.

Deserted by France, Britain had now a fresh enemy. Italy had six battleships built for speed, twenty-one cruisers (ten of 10,000 tons), 120 destroyers and torpedo-boats and over 100 submarines. With a numerous and efficient *Regia Aeronautica* she should have ruled what she inaptly called *Mare Nostrum*. Somerville's Force 'H' which had to look outward to the Atlantic, and Cunningham's fleet at Alexandria, compared in ships and aircraft very poorly with that impressive force. Some time later Cunningham said 'We started very weak at sea and even more in the air. However, because of the very fact of our weakness, our policy had obviously to be one of aggressiveness; and it paid handsome dividends.'

Malta from the first came under bombardment and its supply became a desperate problem. It was the necessary evacuation of women and children in two convoys that led to the

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first clash between the fleets. On July 8th Admiral Tovey's cruiser squadron was attacked by bombers and the *Gloucester* was damaged. Cunningham with the main fleet set his course to intercept the powerful Italian force reported north-west of Benghazi; but when, on the next afternoon, the Italians experienced the *Warspite*'s salvos, they steamed off to their base. After this abortive clash there followed a series of raids on the Italian communications with Libya and the ports on which the land campaign depended; and at length Marshal Graziani moved eastward and occupied Sollum. He was harassed by British aircraft and light mobile forces; but, on the night of September 17th, he resumed his march and reached Sidi Barrani.

It was while Graziani was wasting one of the golden opportunities of the war that Mussolini fell upon Greece whose total population was appreciably smaller than the number of Italians he had boasted he could mobilize. The command of the Aegean seemed to be within his grasp; for, though General Metaxas, the Greek Dictator, had organized a strong army and two defence lines covering the approaches to Larissa and Salonika, there were only covering forces on the mountain frontier. General Parska, the Italian commander-in-chief, planned to force his way down the Viosa valley to Metsovo, the key to the main pass through the Pindus to the plain of Thessaly, with the help of a powerful thrust in Epirus. In the event he made swift progress in Epirus, though the column approaching the fortified town of Yannina was caught in a defile and badly mauled. A similar fate befell the columns converging on Metsovo, on November 7th; and, meanwhile, General Papagos, concentrating on his right, was producing an enveloping movement about the important advanced base of Koritsa, in Albania. He then began to attack in Epirus; and, with the advance on Koritsa gathering strength and the check at Metsovo decisive, the Italian advance was spent within sight of its objective, as it proved, finally.

It was at this point that Cunningham attacked the Italian fleet in the Taranto harbour. The torpedo planes of the *Illus-*

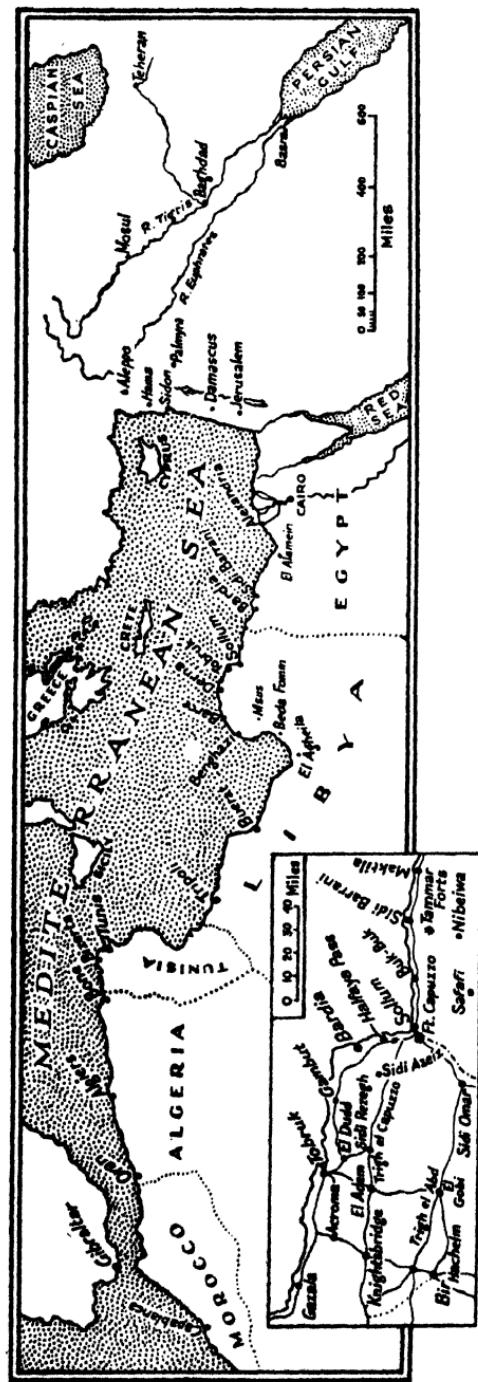
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trious on the night of November 11th scored hits on three battleships. At a stroke the Italian battleship strength was halved. The rest of the fleet was promptly moved to Naples; and when, on November 27th, another clash took place with a force covering a valuable convoy, south of Cape Spartivento, the much more powerful Italian squadron avoided action and the convoy passed safely through the Narrows to Cunningham's charge.

By the end of the first week of December the Italian offensive against Greece had proved a fiasco. Koritsa fell on November 21st with some prisoners and much material. The port of Santi Quaranta was captured on December 6th and, with the fall of Argyrokastro, two days later, the Greeks were everywhere on Albanian soil. But attention was now focused on the Italian reverses in Egypt and Libya; and even the significant appearance of the Luftwaffe in the Narrows on January 9th occasioned less notice than it merited, though the German aircraft almost sank the *Illustrious*. Even in harbour at Malta she was repeatedly attacked until on the night of January 23rd she slipped away under escort to Alexandria. The ordeal of Malta from this time grew more terrible under pitiless dive-bombing.

Winter, bringing exceptionally severe snowstorms, limited but did not stop the Greek advance in Albania. But in February it became evident that Germany was about to intervene; and it was decided to send a force to assist Greece. The advance units arrived early in March and the main Expeditionary Force during the rest of the month. These movements suggest the purpose in the sortie of the Italian fleet 120 miles from the toe of Italy and gave rise to the battle of Matapan.

Admiral Cunningham took his fleet to sea on the afternoon of March 27th and Vice-Admiral Pridham-Wippel's cruiser squadron ran into the fire of the battleship *Vittorio Veneto*. It was slowed down by torpedo-aircraft but turned away. Cunningham with his main fleet decided to risk a night engagement rather than find himself compelled to fight the enemy under shore-based air cover; but the Italian cruisers unwit-



3. The North African and Near Eastern Theatres

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tingly played into his hands by blundering into him in the dark. The three cruisers received battleship broadsides at only two miles range and when the fleet turned away from the Italian destroyers two of the cruisers were sunk by British destroyers. The *Pola*, *Zara* and *Fiume*—eight-inch cruisers—and two new 1,900-ton destroyers were sunk and the *Vittorio Veneto* was damaged but contrived to limp back to harbour. This striking victory, as Cunningham said, kept the Italian fleet ‘out of the ring for the rest of the year’.

Meanwhile Italy had suffered much worse on land where even a trace of insight and daring would have given the Axis Powers full compensation for the failure of the attack on Britain. General Sir Archibald Wavell, commander-in-chief in the Middle East, was in a perilous position. At Sidi Barrani was the spearhead of an Italian force many times more powerful than his small army. To the south lay another imposing Italian force. Here were the ingredients of a converging campaign that offered one of the greatest prizes in the world—Egypt, the Nile delta and the control of the Near East. When Graziani had been at Sidi Barrani a month, Wavell instructed General Maitland Wilson, the commander-in-chief of Egypt, to consider an attack on his advanced positions some seventy miles to the west. There was some inevitable delay owing to the need to assist Greece; but, when the tide had turned there, Wavell decided that the hour had come to strike at Sidi Barrani.

The Italians, some 80,000 strong, were distributed in a series of fortified camps from the sea at Maktila, some miles east of Sidi Barrani to Sofafi, on the escarpment fifty miles to the south-west; but the camps were not mutually supporting, and between Nibeiba and the camp at Sofafi there was a gap of twenty miles. The Sofafi position was contained by the Support Group of the 7th Armoured division, under Brigadier Gott, and Maktila, bombarded by warships, by the Matruh garrison force, when Lieut.-General R. N. O'Connor, commanding the Desert Corps, sent the 7th Royal Tanks through the gap after a short bombardment. His whole force,

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some 31,000 strong, had crossed the seventy miles of desert between the night of December 7th and the morning of the 9th, lying a whole day undiscovered in the open. When the Infantry tanks ('Matildas') went through the gap, and in spite of artillery and machine-gun fire continued to advance, dismay was added to surprise. The enemy tanks were destroyed and Nibeiwa fell in an hour. A little later Tummar West camp was entered by the tanks (now reduced to twenty-two); and by dark the greater part of Tummar East was also captured; and the 7th Armoured division had cut the Sidi Barrani-Buq Buq road.

Next morning Tummar East was cleared; and by nightfall Sidi Barrani was captured. Maktila had been evacuated and the 7th Armoured division took up the pursuit. The 7th Armoured brigade attacked a long column west of Buq Buq and captured 14,000 prisoners and sixty-eight guns, while the 4th Armoured brigade was advancing south of the escarpment towards Halfaya and Capuzzo. It had originally not been thought practicable to stage an operation for more than 'four or five days' but, by the 15th, the road west of Bardia had been cut and all the enemy troops had been driven out of Egypt. With a loss of only 133 killed, 387 wounded and 8 missing, over 38,000 prisoners, 400 guns and 50 tanks had been captured.

Bardia, a natural defensive position, lay within seventeen miles of perimeter defences, with a continuous anti-tank ditch and wire. The 6th Australian division under Major-General Mackay had to be brought up to replace the 4th Indian division (withdrawn for service in East Africa) and guns and ammunition had to be concentrated before the attack could begin; and meanwhile the fleet and Wing-Commander Collishaw's aircraft bombarded it. The 7th Armoured division blocked the escape to the north. The assaulting force consisted of about 20,000 men with 122 guns and 26 tanks when in the early morning of January 3rd, the 21st Australian infantry, covered by artillery, opened the attack from the west. In spite of a counter-attack by tanks the objectives were taken with little loss and, within thirty-six hours after the opening of the

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attack, Bardia was entered. The next day, January 5th, the defenders on the south-eastern sector surrendered and the toll of prisoners was swelled by 45,000.

The next day Tobruk was cut off on the west; and, on January 22nd, it succumbed to similar tactics. Another 30,000 prisoners were captured.

Greater prizes and proportionate difficulty marked the next phase of the campaign. Supply was a formidable leg-chain; and the remainder of the Italian 10th Army was not disposed to present itself in assimilable morsels. A detachment at Me-kili fell back before the British armour, leaving the desert route to Benghazi open. The division now reduced to fifty cruiser and ninety-five light tanks, expected reinforcements on February 12th; but, when on the 3rd columns were found retiring, it was decided to make an attempt to cut the road south of Benghazi at once. By dawn on the 5th armoured cars were just east of Msus. Early that day a strong detachment of the division was sent south-west to cut the coast road north of Agedabia, and another due west to Soluch. That evening the 6th Australian division was pressing hard on the 60th division between Derna and Barce, the 4th armoured brigade was nearing Beda Fomm and the southern detachment was across the two main roads south-west of Beda Fomm.

The same evening a column 5,000 strong, with artillery, ran into the southern detachment to its great surprise and surrendered; and farther north another column was surrounded and captured by the 4th armoured brigade. Heavy fighting continued during the whole of the next day as the main enemy strength began to appear, and one group after another attempted to break through. Some of the enemy, leaving the road, escaped by the dunes; and one powerful group of tanks, with strong infantry support, repeatedly attacked the southern detachment. At one time they penetrated to the reserve company of the 2nd Rifle Brigade. A little after dawn on the 7th, thirty tanks made another attempt to break through to the south; and then General Berganzoli surrendered. Benghazi had been entered the previous day by the Australians. The 10th Army was no more. Its commander,



4. The Abyssinian Campaign

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General Teller, was killed in action; and another 20,000 prisoners with 120 tanks and 190 guns were captured.

This brilliant campaign in two months destroyed an army, captured 130,000 prisoners with 400 tanks and 1,290 guns and an immense amount of transport with a force that was never greater than two divisions. The total casualties were only 500 killed, 1,373 wounded and 55 missing. The Army of the Nile had covered 500 miles; and the problem of supply and maintenance alone seemed almost beyond solution. Its victory was a striking tribute to daring, mobility, land-sea-air integration, and tactical handling. Its design developed out of its success; and, in the *coup de grâce* at Beda Fomm, it was a daring, perilous improvisation that secured a victory which neither the numbers nor material alone could possibly have assured.

At this stage of the war, daring and risk marked the whole of the fighting in Africa. The resources for prudence were not available. The choice lay between a policy of aggressiveness and passive waiting for an attack by overwhelming force. The 4th Indian division began to arrive on the Eritrean front in the first week of January. The 5th Indian division, under Major-General Heath, had passed through Khartoum some months before.

The worst days on this front were over; and the astonishing ascendancy the troops had already won deserved the success they were to gain in a few months. The Duke of Aosta, with nearly a quarter of a million men, seemed at first to be intent on filling his role perfectly. His strength and position designed his army for such harassing tactics as would distract the small British forces and lay the way open for invasion. He seized Gallabat, the door of Amhara, and Kassala, the gate of Eritrea, on July 4th. Four days later he took Kurmuk, far away to the south. On each occasion he used comparatively overwhelming forces; for, including the Khartoum defence force of 2,500 British troops, there were only 4,500 men, with a few obsolete guns and ancient aircraft available for the defence of 1,200 miles of frontier. He captured Moyale, in north Kenya,

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less than a week later; and, on August 4th, invaded and overran British Somaliland with 25,000 Italians.

And then, like Graziani, he seemed to be afflicted with paralysis. In a month the British were striking back at Kassala. They began to raise the patriots in Gojjam. In early November the Italians were compelled to withdraw north of Kassala, and Brigadier Slim's 10th Indian brigade captured Gallabat. Only the failure of his tanks prevented him taking Metemma. Lieut.-General Platt, in command of the Sudan front, had this established ascendancy to build upon when the 4th Indian division reached him; but there, as in Kenya, where Lieut.-General Cunningham was in charge, the campaign developed out of its success. Kassala was evacuated on January 18th and Platt began to follow up. He fought a hard battle at Agordat, and the delay there was responsible for the bloodiest battle of the whole African campaign. His advanced troops reached Keren, which is covered by an escarpment on the left and by mountains echeloned on the right, on February 2nd; and it was not until March 27th that he was able to reduce the position. The first attempt to break through was abandoned after a fortnight. When the battle was resumed on March 15th, it had once more to be broken off for ten days before the successful attack was opened.

By this time, however, Platt and Cunningham had begun to develop, from bases over 1,000 miles apart, one of the most extraordinary pincers movements in the history of warfare. The Italian frontier port of Kismayu at first limited Cunningham's horizon; but while the 1st South African division, under Major-General Brink, was clearing his left flank and reoccupying Moyale, he had launched the 12th African division under Major-General Godwin Austen, and the 11th African division under Major-General Wetherall, across the frontier of Italian Somaliland. The Juba river was the enemy's main defensive line; and even there little resistance was offered. Kismayu was occupied on February 14th and, with the capture of considerable stores and the ascendancy of the South African Air Force making day travel secure, further vistas opened. The water problem was solved by motor transport;

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and the troops moved against the Juba. It was crossed with unexpected ease and Jelib, the centre of the defence, was taken by a converging attack. The Juba action was decisive; and Cunningham, assuming Mogadishu taken, felt confident he could capture Harrar, about 900 miles to the north.

The 11th African division moved swiftly on the heels of the enemy; and, on the evening of February 24th, the 23rd Nigerian brigade entered Mogadishu. In fifty-nine hours it had covered 275 miles; 31,000 enemy troops had been killed, captured or dispersed, and it was learned that there were no forces south of Jijiga. Godwin Austen was sent to follow up the Italian division on his immediate left and then, on March 1st, Cunningham launched his mobile column up the road to Harrar. The Nigerian brigade was in the van; and in seventeen days the head of the column reached Jijiga, 744 miles from Mogadishu. The preceding day Berbera, in British Somaliland, had been captured from Aden; and four days later armoured cars of the Nigerian brigade effected contact with Berbera and the communications of the force were transferred to the Berbera route, a saving of 550 miles.

The Marda pass and the Babile pass detained the troops only a few days; and on March 25th Harrar was entered. By this time a further 19,000 of the enemy had been either killed, captured or dispersed and the Nigerian brigade, under Brigadier Smallwood, had covered 1,054 miles since February 23rd—an average of thirty-five miles per day, an astonishing feat. The 1st South African brigade took the lead on March 27th and two days later passed through Diredawa unopposed and on April 6th entered the capital, Addis Ababa. It was estimated that between 70,000 and 100,000 of the enemy had been disposed of since February 11th, at a cost of 135 killed, 310 wounded and 56 missing.

Meanwhile Platt had taken Keren and entered Asmara. Columns were sent down the two roads to Massawa and, on the evening of April 5th the admiral commanding the port asked and refused terms of surrender. After a short attack, however, he surrendered on April 8th with 450 officers and 10,000 men, Italians and natives. The main force of the enemy

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had retired down the main roads to the mountainous stronghold of Amba Alagi, 235 miles to the south, and to Gondar; and there were still 40,000 infantry and militia south of Addis Ababa, in Galla Sidamo. As the South Africans were required in the north Cunningham sent them against Dessie, to open the road to Asmara; but it was not until May 8th that, after several dour engagements at road blocks, they reached the neighbourhood of Amba Alagi. There they passed under the command of the 5th Indian division who had already made great progress against the formidable mountain chain which rings a considerable stretch of the Strada Imperiale. The 1st South African brigade were able from the south to turn the scale; and, on May 16th, the Duke of Aosta surrendered unconditionally and was given the honours of war.

The initial movements for the capture of Gondar were immediately put in hand; but, after a check, the operations were abandoned until September when the 12th African division resumed the attack. General Nasi, the most skilful and determined of the enemy commanders, held out until November 27th when he surrendered with 11,500 Italians and 12,000 Africans and numerous guns.

Long before this the rest of the resistance had been crushed. The Emperor re-entered his capital on May 5th, the fifth anniversary of Marshal Badoglio's entering it as victor. The event was the crown of the operations of Colonel Sandford and Major Wingate and a few other officers who raised the patriots in Gojjam and, with a mixed Sudanese and Ethiopian force, turned them into an army. The exploits of this column have the texture of romance; and the same is true of the operations of the three brigade groups which crushed the resistance in the south. Soddu was captured with 2 divisional generals, 5,800 officers and men and 10 tanks. By June 21st Jimma was taken with 12,000 Italian prisoners, 3,000 African troops, 4 generals and 8 brigade commanders; and in the first week of July General Gazzera, the supreme commander, surrendered. The whole of Galla Sidamo was clear of the enemy.

But these operations were in the nature of anti-climax. The main pincers movement had closed about Amba Alagi in

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some four months. These first campaigns in Africa, indeed, for daring, for speed, for the disparity between the numbers, position and equipment of the victors and the defeated were unique in the war.

The events in Greece had, however, already once again seriously weakened the Army of the Nile, which now held an unstable position on the border of Cyrenaica at a time when Germany was openly beginning to intervene in the Mediterranean. General Rommel landed in Africa with a German armoured division and, only three weeks after the victory at Beda Fomm, a German armoured reconnaissance unit was encountered at El Agheila. Air attacks had put Benghazi out of use and Tobruk had to be used as supply base for the troops lying 200 miles to the west. As a consequence all available transport was absorbed on the extended communications with the result that the forward units had lost their mobility and were forced to depend upon supply dumps. The 7th Armoured division was in the workshops and the 2nd, which had only arrived from England on January 1st, was in poor mechanical shape.

It was in such circumstances that the enemy attacked on March 31st with the 5th German Light armoured division and two Italian divisions, one armoured and one motorized. The enemy's superior air force had been kept in check by the aggressiveness of the R.A.F.; but it was used, later on, with deadly effect. The 2nd Armoured division slowly withdrew in front of the enemy and, on April 2nd, it was north of Agedabia when the 3rd Armoured brigade arrived at Msus to find that the petrol dump had been fired. The enemy was moving directly on Benghazi and also across the desert, as O'Connor had done in February from the east.

Benghazi was evacuated on the 3rd; and the Australians began to fall back with the Support Group on their left. But central control had now deteriorated; and that night a grave mishap befell the force. General O'Connor with another officer had been sent forward to assist General Neame, then in command, and all three, hastening from Barce to head-

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quarters, ran into a mechanized enemy patrol and were taken prisoner.

The 9th Australian division was now nearing Tobruk. The 2nd Armoured division was in Mekili and could easily have left the next day. The weakened 3rd brigade, making for Derna, had already been captured; and the same fate fell upon the rest of the division when it attempted to leave Mekili at dawn on the following day. Some small parties escaped to Sollum where they were joined by the remains of the Support Group and other detachments on April 11th. There were now few armoured vehicles left for the defence of Egypt; and, apart from the garrison invested in Tobruk, the remnants of the Army of the Nile were back at the frontier. Much too great a strain had been placed on Wavell's limited forces. They had effected wonders. Miracles were beyond them.

It was as this phase of the war was merging into another with steadily opening vistas that President Roosevelt signed a Bill whose significance was at the time very imperfectly appreciated. It is true that Mr. Churchill, on March 12th, called it a 'new Magna Charta'; but neither then nor since has there been any evidence that the public, on either side of the Atlantic, recognized how completely it changed the climate of the war. Some part of its meaning could be gathered from Mr. Roosevelt's asking, on this very day, for an appropriation of 7,000,000,000 dollars for the service of the measure; but, while Britain was undergoing nightly air attacks and the campaigns in Africa and Greece were still being fought out, there was little realization of the full implications of Lease-Lend. Yet in asking for the first appropriation Mr. Roosevelt said '*the American nation has felt it was imperative to the security of America that we encourage the democracies in their heroic resistance by not only maintaining but increasing the flow of material assistance. . . . It will be the bulwark of our defence.*'

It was under the stimulus of traditional misgivings that the Neutrality Act was renewed, against the Administration's wish, in June 1939; and Mr. Roosevelt's Declaration of Neutrality on 5th September 1939 automatically brought the Act

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prohibiting the sale of munitions to belligerents into operation. On November 4th, however, he signed an amendment allowing purchase for cash, provided the munitions were not carried in American ships. The Allies were at once given a chance to overtake the long start which Germany had secured in armament. But, by the end of 1940, more than half the dollar assets and gold stocks of Britain were exhausted, private dollar balances were reduced even more, and marketable U.S. securities by almost two-thirds. In another sixteen months, at the latest, Britain's capacity to pay would be exhausted. The Lease-Lend Bill was designed to meet the excess of need over capacity to pay. America had 'gone into action'.

She had been slower to recognize the threat to her security even than Britain; and yet Mahan had many years before condemned her habit of regarding the 'problem of defence too narrowly'. At last she had begun to consider it with broader vision and realism. In the preceding May the President had announced a 'billion-dollar' defence programme. In the following August he had established a Permanent Joint Defence Board with Canada and opened with Britain conversations about acquiring naval and air bases in the very places Mahan had indicated. Mr. Churchill offered a ninety-nine years' lease; and the agreement was signed in September, in consideration 'of the transfer to Britain of fifty over-age destroyers'. The same month he signed a Conscription Bill; and in November he was re-elected. So, as the clouds gathered over the Balkans, under Mr. Roosevelt's inspired leadership, America pushed her preparations swiftly forward and at the same time assured Britain of 'the tools to finish the job'. A significant milestone had been passed.

Chapter Three

BREAKOUT TO THE EAST

January 1941–December 1941

It was in August 1940, when he recognized that the defeat of Britain would be neither swift nor easy, that Hitler began to consider the launching of a campaign against Russia. His feelings about the Bolsheviks are revealed in *Mein Kampf*. His views as to the direction in which the Reich's *Lebensraum* could best be secured are well-known. His convictions about the conditions of general security are also written in *Mein Kampf*. The development of another Military Power in Europe capable of challenging Germany was regarded as intolerable. Such considerations marked Soviet Russia for attack. It was only the priorities which remained to be settled; and during the year Russia's actions had done much to resolve that problem. Behind her pact with Germany she had been manœuvring more successfully than wisely. She had been granted 'zones of influence', but these, to Hitler's chagrin, she had proceeded to *occupy*. She had absorbed the Baltic States and, in Finland, had captured a deep protective glacis in advance of Leningrad. Bessarabia and northern Bukovina (though the latter was not included in any protocol) were claimed in June; and Hitler decided to halt Russian expansion in the Balkans. In July the Rumanian Ministers were invited to Salzburg and, a few days later, the Bulgarian Ministers to Berchtesgaden.

Hitler's purpose was the formation of a Balkan bloc; but there could be no stability in that area unless Rumania could be brought to return to Hungary and Bulgaria some of the territory she had gained in the first world war. Before the end

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of August, he had accomplished that very delicate piece of surgery; and as a consequence, on September 6th, King Carol abdicated. Ten days later Marshal Antonescu formed a Government and, on October 4th, German troops entered Rumania, ostensibly to assist in training the Rumanian army. These changes could not be palatable to Russia; and, in November, as the price of her joining the Tripartite Pact, Molotov stubbornly pressed her demand for the conclusion of a mutual assistance pact between the Soviet Union and Bulgaria and her claim for a base for land and naval forces within range of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. Such claims were a direct and fundamental challenge to Hitler's Balkan policy; and, in the face of the weight of German military opinion, he issued a directive on December 18th for a campaign against Russia. The frontiers of incompatibility had been reached. Hitler, indeed, found some support among his generals for an attack in the near future rather than later when Russia might be strong enough to take the initiative. This, of course, entailed a two-front war, though Hitler hoped the eastern front would be eliminated before the western developed. He had failed to concentrate the requisite strength and the appropriate means for a successful campaign against Britain when she was defenceless and now he was driven to march east while she remained undefeated; so inevitably does one error in strategy breed others.

Yugoslavia's position differed from that of Bulgaria and Rumania. Fearing Italian designs in Dalmatia, she saw no reason to hope anything from Italy's ally. But she preserved her neutrality scrupulously. Though she expelled German agents, she refused a guarantee from Britain and France and, after the fall of the latter, she for the first time established diplomatic relations with Soviet Russia. But she inevitably figured in Hitler's plans. The Italian campaign against Greece had led to the establishment of British sea and air bases there and Hitler could not tolerate the thought of their permanence. As early as November he began to contemplate an independent offensive against Greece and, for its occupation

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if not for the campaign, the communication system of Yugoslavia was necessary.

The Neutrals, indeed, could keep no easy course during the war. Their difficulties were proportioned to their nearness and usefulness to Germany, and, after the fall of France, to the only other great military power in Europe—Russia. They retained independence as long as their strength and determination to assure it prevailed. But they had to make the best terms they could with both sides. These shifts were well understood; and, in this phase of the war, it was more important to Great Britain that, unless they could *certainly* maintain themselves against German attack, they should remain neutral or if, like Turkey, an ally (though linked by Mr. Churchill with Vichy France and Japan among the ‘balancing countries’), a quiescent ally.

Spain, like Turkey, lies at one of the nodal points of the Mediterranean and, also like Turkey, she could have done Britain great, if not irreparable, harm by throwing in her lot with Germany. But she contrived to preserve her independence by expressions of approval, which cost her nothing, though from 27th June 1940 the German troops were at her frontier. So the western gate of the Mediterranean remained open; and, as Turkey while remaining out of the war, was able to preserve her territory inviolate, there was a strong road-block covering Britain’s base at the eastern gate.

By the end of 1940 Hitler’s Balkan plans were well advanced; and on February 9th, Mr. Churchill broadcast a warning to Bulgaria in which he stated that the German army in Rumania stretched ‘its forward tentacles’ into Bulgaria whose airfields were occupied by thousands of German ground personnel. A month earlier, Molotov had insisted to the German ambassador in Moscow that the appearance of armed forces in Bulgaria would be a ‘violation of the security interests of the U.S.S.R.’. But Hitler was following a deliberately chosen path, and the next step required that his troops should be on the eastern frontiers of Yugoslavia. Only then could he

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be certain that her Government would receive his invitation in the right spirit.

The clouds over the Balkans gathered swiftly during March. On the first day of the month Bulgaria joined the Tripartite pact. On the 9th Italy launched a fresh offensive against Greece though it was broken up within a week. On March 25th the Yugoslav Ministers signed the Tripartite pact in Vienna; but on their return from Vienna, the next day, such was the outcry that a military *coup d'état* was able to sweep away Prince Paul, the Regent, and the Government, and anticipate the coming of age of Prince Peter. He was sworn in as King, the following day, March 28th; and preparations for the inevitable German attack were pressed through at once. On the last day of the month the German and Yugoslav Ministers abandoned their posts. Three days later the German Legation left Belgrade; and the capital was declared an open city. The stage was being set for a fresh demonstration of the triumphant German war machine. The next day the Germans crossed the frontier, and Russia, obdurate and oblique to the end, signed a pact of friendship with Yugoslavia, but ante-dated it April 5th.

Only ten days had passed since the *coup d'état*. Mobilization was far from complete, though a million men were available, hardy, brave, and at least partly trained. There were some hundreds of aircraft, mainly modern; but there were few armoured vehicles, and mobility ran to the tempo of the nineteenth century. It was currently believed that the country was unsuitable for mechanized traffic, a faith that was to be shattered all too soon. No plans had been concerted with the Allies. An obstinate determination to preserve neutrality prevented even the appearance of collaboration; and when Prince Paul's Government was swept aside, it was too late.

At a sacrifice of all but an insignificant reserve the troops were concentrated for the defence of the long vulnerable frontiers, and the normal advantages of the initiative were thereby rendered overwhelming. Numerically, they were little inferior to the enemy of whose thirty-three divisions six were armoured; but they fought within a potential encirclement.



5. The Balkans and Crete

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The wanton aerial bombardment of Belgrade, and the mass slaughter of so many innocent noncombatants, did not improve their morale; and the enemy columns broke down resistance with bewildering speed. After some days of stiff fighting, the passes in the eastern mountains were penetrated by Field-Marshal List's forces and the German armour was soon speeding through the Strumnitsa valley into the Vardar valley, through Uskub (Skoplje) to Tetovo, and up the Ni-shava valley to Nish. At the same time, General von Weichs's columns were moving down the Sava valley and through Zagreb to Susac and Bihac.

Though counter-attacked in the Morava valley, Kleist's armour, on April 10th, was only sixty miles south-east of Belgrade which Weichs's Sava column was approaching from the north-west. Two days later Kleist was on the outskirts of the capital and Weichs some twenty miles to the west. The next day it was occupied; and by this time, in a bare week, the Yugoslav forces were losing cohesion. Long columns were streaming away from Belgrade and Banjaluka, harried by the Luftwaffe. Only in the tangled country west of Uskub did the main forces show their characteristic toughness; but they were attacked from the four points of the compass and, on April 15th, organized resistance was flickering out. Two days later the army surrendered. It had never been given a chance against the practised technique of the Germans. General Simovitch and the Government were now in Athens; and the next day, M. Korizis, the Greek Premier, committed suicide. For, of course, the Yugoslav collapse had carried with it the fall of Greece. The British intervention had been doomed from the first. In February General Papagos had agreed to strengthen a position west of the Vardar with forces withdrawn from Macedonia and Albania; but ten days later he had to admit that both operations were impracticable. The plan concerted with the British generals was now fatally compromised; and even the chance of a safe Greek withdrawal from Albania was lost.

Nevertheless the 100-mile line from the Aegean, east of Mt. Olympus, to the Yugoslav frontier was strong, though too

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weakly manned. It was now to be held by the New Zealand division under Major-General Freyberg, the 1st Armoured brigade and a brigade of the 6th Australian division, with part of the 12th Greek division—the whole under General Blamey—the 20th Greek division and the rest of the 12th division; and the two Greek divisions had seen no fighting. General Sir Maitland Wilson, in command of the sector and the Expeditionary Force, had stationed detachments at Amyntaion under Major-General Mackay, to guard his rear against a possible descent from Monastir into the Kozani plain.

But on the fifth day of the campaign this was already a grim reality. The Greeks at Rupel Pass fought bravely for a week, and rearguards covered the withdrawal of some of the troops by sea. But the German armour pierced the Strumnitsa valley in Yugoslavia, and by the evening of the third day they had passed down the Vardar valley into Salonika. The next day another column passed through Uskub to Tetovo and Prilep; and on April 10th they were through the Monastir Gap. From that moment General Wilson was committed to a prolonged rearguard action. For two days Mackay's forces held off the enemy while the troops farther east fell back; but General Wilson, with the Germans pressing down the Viosa valley on the heels of the Greeks, and turning west from the Monastir Gap against their rear, saw that only at Thermopylae, far away in the south, could his small force stand, even momentarily, alone.

The New Zealand division and the 6th Australian division, now known again as the 'Anzac Corps', fell back steadily. For two days the 21st New Zealand battalion held the Peneios gorge; but as they fell back, the conditions steadily deteriorated. The mist lifted and the enemy bombing increased as the loss of airfields weakened the R.A.F. protection. Moreover while they fought in snow in the north, when they reached Thermopylae, on April 20th, it was torrid heat. By this time the Greek Government had requested the withdrawal of the imperial troops from Greece; and the Greek Epirus army had been compelled to surrender. The Germans began to move

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swiftly down the western coast and the date of embarkation had to be advanced. It had to be carried out over open beaches; and the arrival of the German parachutists at the Corinth canal, in the midst of the evacuation, compelled the diversion of a New Zealand brigade to Porto Rafti, east of Athens. There was no air cover; but despite the conditions, though guns, transport and equipment had to be left behind, of the 57,657 troops landed—24,000 British, 17,125 Australians, and 16,532 New Zealand—some 43,000 were evacuated, 27,000 to Crete.

The last troops were taken off on the night of April 30th-May 1st, from the Kalamata area, the navy performing its accustomed role of taking every handicap in its stride. It is difficult to see how Britain could have refused the help requested by Greece, even when in March the agreed plan was no longer feasible; but since she could not send sufficient assistance to be certainly, or even probably, effective, it would have been a wiser and stronger policy to have stayed away. By intervention she gained nothing, Yugoslavia gained nothing, Greece gained nothing. Only a skilful plan of co-operation with Yugoslavia could have saved the situation; but for that the revolution had come too late. Yugoslavia and Greece entered upon one of the darkest periods of their history. Britain lost prestige, some excellent troops, ships and material, and also the first exchange with Rommel; and there was worse to come.

It soon became evident that the troops evacuated to Crete would have to fight for their foothold; and, in spite of the difficulties of defence, success should not have been impossible. The island had been under British occupation for six months; but only the Suda Bay naval anchorage had been put in a state of defence, and, by the occupation of the Aegean islands, Crete came under persistent air attack. It was then too late for the necessary reinforcement. Only a few guns, a little transport and nine infantry tanks got through. Two infantry battalions and two of Layforce (a Commando force) followed.

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Major-General Freyberg was placed in charge of the 28,600 troops, almost all of whom were weary after the campaign in Greece and short of equipment. Some were even unarmed. The handful of tanks was divided among the main centres, Maleme, Retimo and Heraclion; and there were three in reserve. The fourth defence sector was Suda Bay, commanded by Major-General Weston of the Royal Marines; but the strongest force was at Maleme where Brigadier Puttick had the 4th and 5th New Zealand brigades, a composite brigade and a Greek battalion.

For some days the island airfields had been steadily bombed so that the small force of fighters had been withdrawn when, soon after dawn on May 20th, the sky was seen to be full of aircraft, some bombing and machine-gunning everything on the roads, others discharging parachutists and others loosing silver gliders. The landings went on with clockwork precision and, though many of the first parachutists were at once destroyed at Maleme and about Canea the Germans from the first began to take root.

A determined counter-attack was delivered at Maleme on the night of the 21st, but with the dawn the gains had to be abandoned. Two attempts to land from the sea on the 22nd were dispersed or sunk; but Maleme airfield was captured that day, and two days later the front was forced back to Canea. The issue became grave. On the sixth day even the Canea position was pierced, and the crisis had come for both sides; for, if the defence found the situation almost beyond hope, an air-landed force must sooner or later secure normal land or sea supply lines or perish. That problem grew with success; and the issue was a matter of margins. The next day, May 27th, General Wavell, on Freyberg's report, ordered the withdrawal; and on the following night the troops at Heraclion were evacuated. The Retimo garrison did not receive the order to withdraw and fought on to the end. The rest of the troops from Maleme, Canea and Suda Bay withdrew across the island to Sphakia covered by stubborn rearguards. Of the 14,580 evacuated 7,130 (of 14,000) were British, 2,890 (of 6,450) were Australian, and 4,560 (of 7,100) New Zealand

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troops. The bulk of Layforce and many Marines were left behind. Nothing redeemed this campaign but outstanding courage. In the end, the navy lost 3 cruisers, 6 destroyers and 29 smaller craft sunk, and 1 battleship, 4 cruisers and 7 destroyers damaged. The enemy casualties were put at 12,000-15,000; and a more significant casualty was the loss of faith in airborne operations. The cost had been too great.

In Greece, we need never have been involved; in Crete, a little more forethought, perhaps a little more risk, might have turned the tables on the invader.

In the battle of the Atlantic, too, the navy suffered serious losses about this time. Though it was imperative to keep German warships within their own waters, the *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* had broken out and had sunk 115,622 tons of shipping before withdrawing to Brest. They were immobilized in harbour by persistent bombing and so prevented reinforcing the submarine offensive. When the battleship *Bismarck* and the cruiser *Prinz Eugen* were detected in a Norwegian Fjord, on May 21st, it was decided to intercept them.

Two days later they were sighted in the Denmark Strait, north of Iceland (which with the Faroes, Britain had occupied after the invasion of Norway) and the battle-cruiser *Hood* was sunk in the first exchanges which set the *Bismarck* on fire. Admiral Tovey in the battleship *King George V* with the aircraft-carrier *Victorious*, Vice-Admiral Somerville with his Gibraltar squadron, and the battleships *Rodney* and *Renown* from an Atlantic convoy then joined the chase. After the torpedo-carrying planes of the *Victorious* had secured a hit that night, the warships were lost, the *Prinz Eugen* altogether and the *Bismarck* for thirty-one hours. It was not until 10.30 a.m. on the 26th that a flying-boat reported the *Bismarck* 550 miles west of Land's End. That evening torpedo-carrying planes from the *Ark Royal* severely damaged her; and in the darkness destroyer attack brought her to a standstill, only 400 miles from Brest and safety. She was under way again when, in the morning, in a quarter of an hour, the *King George V* and the *Rodney* battered her into helplessness, and the *Dorsetshire*

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sank her with torpedoes. She had only been in commission six months and it was thought that her numerous bulkheads made her unsinkable.

But that incident took place on the western seas and the campaign in Greece lit up the foreground and led the Iraq Prime Minister, Rashid Ali Ghailani, to support the intrigues of the four Iraqi generals known as the 'Golden Square' and malcontents like the Mufti of Jerusalem against Britain. Though Iraq was bound by treaty to assist Britain, Rashid Ali contemplated restoring diplomatic relations with Germany. Rashid Ali had become Prime Minister as a result of a *coup d'état* on April 3rd. A brigade from India was sent to Basra in mid-April but Rashid Ali refused permission for a second to land; at the end of the month British women and children were moved from Baghdad to the R.A.F. training school at Habbaniya nearby. The next day the Iraqi mechanized force occupied the high ground overlooking Habbaniya and General Wavell was compelled to find a mobile column to deal with the critical situation.

Major-General J. G. W. Clark was given charge of the force and the picturesque Arab Legion played a distinguished part in the recapture of Rutba, near the Transjordan frontier, on May 18th. In the meantime the Habbaniya garrison, reinforced by some troops and aircraft, had driven the Iraqi to Fallujah which Clark's column captured on the 19th. It was retaken temporarily three days later; and that was the last kick of the offensive. Clark ejected the rebels with great loss and moved out against the capital in two columns, on May 30th, as General Quinan advanced up the Baghdad railway from Basra. Rashid Ali fled. The Mayor of Baghdad surrendered. On June 1st, the Regent returned and formed a legitimate government; and the situation soon returned to normal. There can, however, be little doubt that the revolt would not have been crushed so swiftly and so cheaply if the Germans had not been held to the costly battle in Crete.

German influence in Syria had been causing Britain anxiety

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for some time. Syrian aerodromes had been used to assist the revolt in Iraq; and General Wavell could see the danger that Turkey might be threatened with encirclement and the security of his flank in Egypt compromised; but his resources were never equal to the calls upon them.

There were other difficulties. General de Gaulle promised independence to Syria and Lebanon and the British Government endorsed the promise. But the general also pressed the use of Free French troops; and Wavell thought they might stimulate instead of weaken the resistance. General Wilson, the commander-in-chief, was inferior in numbers and material; and yet his small force made swift progress when it crossed the frontier on June 8th. The 7th Australian division moved rapidly up the coast and crossed the Litani river with the help of a commando from Cyprus, landed to the north, while the 5th Indian brigade followed the ancient pilgrims' way through Deraa and up the Yarmuk railway and General Gentilhomme's Free French troops passed through them to within ten miles of Damascus. It was then that Dentz, realizing the weakness of the Allied forces, struck back heavily, making skilful use of his medium tanks.

Wavell had to scrape together reinforcements; but it was some days before the advance could be resumed. On the evening of the 18th, Wilson demanded the withdrawal from Damascus by the next morning in order to preserve the city from damage. Dentz refused, and the 5th Indian brigade made a brilliant advance west of Damascus while the Free French were cutting the city off from the east. The troops of General Dentz withdrew and the ancient city, the capital of Syria, was entered on June 21st.

The collapse of the defence was due not so much to the immediate threat as to a new movement which had been swiftly developed from Iraq. General Clark's column ('Hab-force') began to move towards Palmyra and Homs, and two brigades of General Quinan's forces up the Euphrates by Abu Kemal towards Deir es Zor. The Free French were advancing upon Homs from the south while part of the 6th Australian division moved upon Rayak. The 7th Australian division had

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taken Sidon some days before and was now moving against the strongly defended position of Damour covering Beirut. But it was captured only on July 9th with the assistance of the navy; and by this time Habforce was through the strong position at Palmyra and nearing Homs.

General Dentz, with a force moving towards Aleppo and the whole of his position collapsing, had already asked for an armistice, though the request only reached headquarters on July 11th. The terms granted were wisely generous and the Convention was signed three days later at Acre. The unnecessary campaign, hard fought and marked by bitter feelings against the Free French, was won by tactical skill against the disadvantage of a terrain admirably suited to defence.

Meanwhile Wavell had been compelled to attend to the western frontier of Egypt and to the remaining resistance in Abyssinia. Both of these campaigns were being conducted simultaneously with the operations in Crete and Iraq. Always fighting with a grave inferiority in numbers and material, Wavell overcame the greatest disadvantages of terrain and tropical weather; and, by speed and boldness, he accomplished what the textbooks would have held the impossible before he was transferred to India, on July 1st, as commander-in-chief. General Auchinleck, whom he replaced, succeeded him as General Officer commanding-in-chief the Middle East; and Mr. Oliver Lyttelton, as Minister, Middle East and Lieut.-General Sir Robert Haining, as Intendant General, were sent out to ease the burden Wavell had borne.

Wavell's first preoccupation was with the German-Italian front on the fringes of Libya. He had never the resources to risk the dangerous policy of a 'passive defensive'. Tobruk was besieged and, although its garrison wrote a magnificent page of history, its supply was a costly problem. In the early part of May a weakness in the enemy's armoured strength and supply on the frontier was reported, and Wavell decided to take advantage of it. The attack which was delivered on May 15th had at its disposal thirty cruiser and thirty-five 'I' tanks.

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Lieut.-General Sir Noel Beresford-Peirse was then in command in the western desert, and at first all went well. Sollum and Capuzzo were retaken and, at but slight cost, considerable losses were inflicted on the enemy. The next day, however, the enemy reacted with a much stronger force of tanks and compelled a withdrawal. Rommel had been forbidden to go beyond the frontier; but he was not the man to be rushed out of his position.

Some ten days later, he emphasized the lesson by attacking on a broad front and overrunning the Halfaya pass. It was at once organized for defence; and the last state was worse than the first.

Exactly a month later an attempt was made to redeem the situation. The escarpment running south-east from Sollum dictated the shape of all the frontier operations. Vehicles can cross it only by the steep saddles at Sollum and Halfaya pass; but it might be turned from the south. The plan adopted was to attack south of the escarpment with the open flank covered by the bulk of the 7th Armoured division while a column advanced along the coast to Sollum and assisted the centre column to capture Halfaya pass.

As usual the attack secured an initial success. The 22nd Guards brigade, in the centre, took Musaid and Capuzzo, though Sollum and Halfaya pass were firmly held; and, on June 17th, the third day of the battle, enemy armour drove back the 7th Armoured division. General Messervy, in charge of the forward position, then decided that his one safe course was to withdraw. The failure of the attack was evident. Losses in personnel were about equal; but Beresford-Peirse lost in addition twenty-five cruiser and seventy 'I' tanks, and the disparity in armour was greater than before. The design of the attack was so conventional that it was readily anticipated; and the Germans can be trusted in such circumstances to act with ordinary competence.

How do these African and Near East campaigns bear on the main purpose of the war? They represent another of the great opportunities lost by the Germans; and how certainly it was lost can be appreciated when it is seen how near they

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came to success in the following summer. Another armoured division might have taken them to the Nile delta with incalculable effects. Meanwhile the eyes of the world were turned on the campaign in Russia for which Hitler had sacrificed so much.

The battles in Greece and Crete, in Iraq and Syria, in Italian East Africa and in the Western Desert were made to appear like the clashes of patrols when the German armies crossed the Russian frontiers on June 22nd. Even in France, such mighty forces had not been engaged; for now, for the first time, the *Wehrmacht* encountered opposition of potentially greater numerical strength. At that moment the 'battle of the Atlantic' was at a peak. Never again were the losses of shipping available for the supply of Britain to reach such a figure relative to replacements. By the end of June, 1,738 British, Allied and neutral vessels of a total tonnage of 7,118,112 had been sunk; and of these 1,028 were British merchantmen of a tonnage of 4,605,132. The air campaign too, had caused immense destruction. But now, at a stroke, the strategic outlook was revolutionized. The objective observer must have been bewildered to find Hitler undertaking the hazards of a campaign against Russia when so much had been achieved against Britain but so much remained to do.

Something of this, and of their own over-confidence, was reflected in the Russians' surprise at the opening of the campaign. But nothing could have been more unreasonable. When, in the preceding November, Molotov had, on the German initiative, discussed with Hitler and Ribbentrop collaboration with the Powers of the Tripartite Pact, he had attempted to drive so hard a bargain that Hitler tired of the negotiations and issued a directive for the preparation of a 'quick campaign' to 'crush Soviet Russia'.

Molotov had agreed that their pact had been a good business deal and that it would be in the interests of both to collaborate 'and not fight each other'. But when his terms for collaborating with the Tripartite Powers in the congenial task of dividing up the 'gigantic world-wide estate in bankruptcy'

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of the British Empire were ignored, what inference could he reasonably draw if not that the time for negotiation was over? Moreover, the United States warned Russia in January that Germany had decided to attack. Mr. Churchill through Sir Stafford Cripps, the British Ambassador in Moscow, in April, informed Stalin of the exact date. And Rudolf Hess, Hitler's deputy, had landed in Scotland from an aeroplane on May 12th and brought news of the impending attack, under the impression that the British Government could be induced to accept the 'reasonable peace' which Hitler was prepared to offer, and join the 'holy war'.

Mr. Churchill, at least, was not at a loss when Hitler crossed the Russian frontiers. That night he broadcast, 'We shall give whatever help we can to Russia and the Russian people. We shall appeal to all our friends and Allies in every part of the world to take the same course and pursue it, as we shall, faithfully and steadfastly to the end.' He fulfilled that pledge. On the following day, Mr. Sumner Welles, Assistant Secretary of State in America, made a statement of broadly similar purport. Such was the background of the titanic struggle which opened in Russia, such the new background of the war.

Russia's commission on Germany's gains was a deep shock-absorbing area beyond her 1939 frontiers; but from the White Sea to the Black Sea, her battlefield must have measured almost 1,800 miles.

The German directive provided for 'deep armoured wedges' to break up and cut off the Russian armies in the forward area; and three army groups took the field to accomplish it. They, and the component armies, were commanded by soldiers whose names were already well-known, and some of which were to be written more deeply in the history of the next four years. In the north Field-Marshal von Leeb commanded the armies of General von Küchler (against the Baltic States) and General Busch (on the Pskov-Leningrad axis) with the Panzer army of General Hoeppner and the air fleet under General Keller. The central group was commanded by Field-Marshal von Bock, and included the armies of Field-Marshal von



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Kluge, General Strauss and General von Weichs, the Panzer armies of General Guderian and General Hoth and the air fleet of Field-Marshal Kesselring. The third group was commanded by the ablest German general the war produced, Field-Marshal von Rundstedt, and comprised the armies of General Stuelpnagel, and Field-Marshal von Reichenau with General von Kleist's Panzer army and General Loeb's air

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fleet. He had also under his control the German and Rumanian army of Marshal Antonescu and the German and Rumanian army of General von Schubert. General Falkenhorst, the military commander in Norway, was in charge of the front between the Baltic and the White Sea, with Marshal Mannerheim commanding the German and Finnish divisions south and immediately north of Lake Ladoga and General Dietl's German force on the Murmansk sector.

Apart from the Finns and Rumanians, whose contribution in the end was 26 divisions, the invading force amounted to 160 divisions, including 20 armoured divisions, and 3 air fleets with a first-line strength of 3,000 planes. The Red Army was of much the same strength, some 158 divisions and 54 tank brigades. As each of these was about half the tank strength of a German armoured division, the Russians had a superiority of about 25 per cent; and they had about twice the number of aircraft. Generals Voroshilov, Timoshenko and Budyonny assumed command of the northern, central and southern fronts respectively. But by the second week in July the Germans were beginning to think they were within sight of the end while the Russians were beginning to think they had taken the measure of the attack. Both were oversanguine; but the German error was the graver.

The Luftwaffe attack on the Russian aerodromes, with which the campaign opened, gained less than the expected success because of the dispersal of the Soviet aircraft; but the ground forces carried out their role with a daring and precision that seemed to promise all that the plan demanded. A strong armoured thrust through Vilna opened the way to Dvinsk in the north-east and Minsk in the south-east while similar thrusts across the Bug threatened Minsk from the south-west, by way of the historic road of advance through Baranovice to Smolensk and Moscow, and the line of the Beresina by the Kobrin road to Bobruisk. They were covered in the north by an advance on Shavli, the centre of communications in Lithuania, and in the south by Rundstedt's thrusts against Luck and Brody which, combined with attacks across the Carpathians, compelled the evacuation of the deep pocket

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between the western Bug and the San. The converging thrusts which met beyond Minsk on June 30th cut off the bulk of the two Russian armies in the neighbourhood of Bialystok and, in spite of stubborn resistance and heavy counter-attacks, the Russians lost an immense number of prisoners. In a few days the Germans were at the Beresina, at Borisov as well as Bobruisk; and fierce battles were taking place miles away to the west. On July 3rd Stalin called to the troops cut off to launch guerrilla warfare and a 'scorched earth' policy, and the warfare changed its shape; but the impetus of the attack did not die down until nearly a week later.

On July 13th the German News Agency, paraphrasing the official announcement of the night before, declared that Leningrad was immediately threatened, the occupation of Kiev imminent and the road to Moscow open. None of these claims was even approximately correct; but, when the advance was resumed in a few days, the fighting swiftly moved to Smolensk and a desperate battle, the first true battle in depth, continued for four weeks.

The Germans transferred their attentions to the northern and southern flanks of this dour struggle. The Russians had evacuated Bessarabia and withdrawn across the Dneister in the fourth week of July, and Rundstedt pressed forward towards Kiev. A daring armoured thrust even penetrated to the suburbs; but it was driven out and it was farther south, in the neighbourhood of Uman, that on August 10th the first significant success was secured. Part of three of Budyonny's armies were encircled and destroyed. The battle of Smolensk was then ending; and a more ambitious operation for the destruction of Budyonny's armies and the capture of Kiev was initiated. Gomel, on the railway to Briansk, was captured on August 20th and Guderian, holding off Koniev in attack and counter-attack, turned south to meet the northward thrust of Kleist across the Dnieper. The two Panzer armies met at Lohovitsa, 120 miles to the east of Kiev on September 14th; and the Kiev armies were trapped. Kiev itself was captured from the west on September 19th and the greatest haul of prisoners yet made, about 600,000, was rounded up.

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Meanwhile Leeb had cut off Leningrad and forced his way into the suburbs. The direct advance from the west had not been made possible until the last day of August when Viipuri was captured, as the last resistance of northern Estonia was being crushed and the defences of Luga were being penetrated. But the defence of Leningrad steadily hardened as the advance proceeded. Voroshilov had taken personal charge. A People's Volunteer Guard was formed; and the advance was contested step by step. In a few days, however, the fighting had reached the outskirts of Krasnoye Selo, some fifteen miles from the city. A more damaging, because more skilful, attack carried the Germans into Schlüsselburg and cut the communications with the rest of Russia. But hopes and fears alike were falsified. On September 12th the first snow fell, and the attack spent itself in vain. It was the first occasion on which the Germans failed to capture a position which was the object of direct, immediate and persistent attack by every means that modern warfare had placed at their disposal. They succeeded in bringing the city under siege; but it held out to provide a strong anchor for the front in the vital test that was approaching.

Timoshenko had, meanwhile, not only held his own, but slightly improved his position in the centre and, under the successful actions at Elnya and Yartsevo, had damped down the swing of the pendulum on the central front. The Germans had inflicted tremendous losses on the Russians, in men, material and natural resources; but the 'quick' decision was still to seek. Moreover Britain had signed with Russia, on July 12th, a Treaty of Alliance providing for mutual assistance and joint peace negotiations; and seven weeks later the first of the many British convoys was on the way to Archangel.

It was in the middle of this period that the final settlement of the Near East was forced upon the Allies by events in Persia. Driven from Iraq, the grand Mufti and other malcontents found refuge in Persia and were reinforced by a numerous German mission from Ankara. After the British and Russian Ambassadors had made representations in vain, joint

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operations were begun. General Novikov entered Persia from the north, on August 25th, while General Quinan cleared the south-west corner of the country and a column from Iraq advanced through Khanikin towards Hamadan. Swift progress was made and on the fourth day the Shah capitulated, though it was not until mid-September that the Allies' terms were carried out. On the 16th the Shah abdicated and was replaced by the Crown Prince.

Towards the end of the following January an Anglo-Soviet-Iranian Treaty was signed, and soon Persia became one of the main lines through which the Allies supplied Russia. By that route and the perilous and costly sea passage around the north coast of Norway, Great Britain, the United States and Canada, by June 1944 the Russians stated, had sent to Russia over 10·1 million tons of munitions and supplies, including 5,395 guns, 14,698 aircraft, 9,214 tanks, 219,974 trucks and transport vehicles, 40 million shells, 1,311 million cartridges, 240,000 tons of explosives and petrol, aluminium, copper, zinc, steel and steel rails, tin, lead and cobalt. It was an important factor in the Russian victory; in the matter of mobility it may have been vital.

One other event occurred during this period which played a momentous part in completing the pattern of the war. Mr. Churchill crossed the Atlantic in the battleship *Prince of Wales* and reached Argentia, in south-east Newfoundland, on August 9th to meet President Roosevelt for a discussion which resulted in the production of the 'Atlantic Charter'. Although this joint statement was Mr. Churchill's initiative, every word in the final draft was weighed and fully considered (and part of it contributed) by Mr. Roosevelt. It was a declaration by the two great free democracies to a world from which the rule of law seemed to have vanished, of the principles upon which such a system must be re-established.

The meeting was announced and the text made known in a special broadcast on the afternoon of August 14th, by Mr. Attlee, the Lord Privy Seal and Deputy Prime Minister. Its text is as follows:

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'The President of the United States, and the Prime Minister, Mr. Churchill, representing his Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, being met together, deem it right to make known certain common principles in the national policies of their respective countries on which they base their hopes for a better future for the world.

'First. Their countries seek no aggrandisement, territorial or other.

'Second. They desire to see no territorial changes that do not accord with the freely expressed wishes of the people concerned.

'Third. They respect the right of all peoples to choose the form of Government under which they will live; and they wish to see sovereign rights restored to those who have been forcibly deprived of them.

'Fourth. They will endeavour with due respect to their existing obligations, to further enjoyment by all States, great or small, victor or vanquished, of access, on equal terms, to the trade and to the raw materials of the world which are needed for their economic prosperity.

'Fifth. They desire to bring about the fullest collaboration between all nations in the economic field with the object of securing for all improved labour standards, economic advancement and social security.

'Sixth. After the final destruction of the Nazi tyranny, they hope to see established a peace which will afford to all nations the means of dwelling in safety within their own boundaries, and which will afford assurance that all men in all the lands may live out their lives in freedom from fear and want.

'Seventh. Such a peace would enable all men to traverse the high seas and oceans without hindrance.

'Eighth. They believe all of the nations, for realistic as well as spiritual reasons, must come to the abandonment of the use of force. Since no future peace can be maintained, if land, sea or air armament continue to be employed by nations which threaten aggression outside of their frontiers, they believe, pending the establishment of a wider and permanent system of general security, that the disarmament of such

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nations is essential. They will likewise aid and encourage all practicable measures which will lighten for peace-loving peoples the crushing burden of armament.'

At this moment the German military offensive was still in full tide. No one could recognize that its might was possibly on the ebb when about Smolensk the first impetus was slowed down. But the German political offensive, the propaganda of the New Order in Europe, was still developing its initiative in a world that could find no obvious alternative; and it may be difficult now to appreciate how specious was the picture of a Europe without frontiers and without war. The Atlantic Charter provided an alternative more acceptable to Europeans bred in the tradition of Christendom; and it became the most important of the imponderables. The outcome of the war was still difficult to imagine; but the troubled nations could now see the promised land their steadfastness might reach.

Such considerations were all the more important as the war pressed across the frontiers of all countries. The air offensive against British towns continued. The attack on Britain's life-line gathered strength; and Mr. Churchill's speech in the Secret Session of the House of Commons, on June 25th, made it clear that the Government was still gravely preoccupied with the perils of a German invasion from the Continent. But it was what in March became known as the 'Battle of the Atlantic' that caused most concern. With the total losses of shipping upon which Britain relied for its supplies already over seven million tons, that was inevitable. Hitler had announced that the U-boat war at sea would begin in the spring and it had reached a peak about this time. At the beginning of March there were over 2,600,000 tons of damaged shipping in the ports; and, during that and the next two months, the losses gathered way.

The battle was fought out with great skill and versatility on both sides; and the thrust and parry continued as if it were the contest of skilled duellists. Britain was driven to use the west coast ports as the air activity made the Channel and

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North Sea passage more and more hazardous. The battle drifted out into the Atlantic; the U-boats operated off Dakar and the Cape Verde Islands. Then, with the long-range Fokker Wulf, the enemy began to fly from Brest or Bordeaux right round the British Islands, picking up convoys on the way, to refuel in Norway and fly back. During the winter the U-boats, with a fresh technique, developed night attacks with great success. It is difficult to imagine what would have happened if the campaign had continued with the same success as in June; but, just as the position had become critical, Hitler changed his objective and the counter-attack and shipbuilding began to make up their leeway.

The bomber offensive had been ravaging Britain, in spite of the developing anti-aircraft defence; and it was not until March that the night fighters began to trouble the German pilots seriously. The duration of the attacks was prolonged in order to wear down the people's morale; and the heaviest raid on London was made on the night of April 16th. On that occasion the Germans used 711 aircraft which dropped 1,026 tons of explosive and 150 tons of incendiary bombs. St. Paul's was among the historic buildings damaged. The campaign was extended to the industrial midlands, to the ports—Portsmouth, Plymouth, Belfast, Liverpool (for many consecutive nights) to Glasgow; and then, with the opening of the campaign against Russia, it slackened. Where forty-four bomber groups had been in use, there were henceforth only eight; but more fighter units than the Germans expected or desired had to be kept in the west to deal with the daylight sweeps over occupied territory which, beginning on June 14th, continued to the end of the year on all reasonable flying days. After August 27th, such sweeps encountered, occasionally, strong opposition.

Most of the German raids inflicted damage, and, in spite of ingenious attempts—dummy fires and so on—to lead the raiders away from important targets some of them succeeded in bombing culverts, stations, junctions and factories. The Germans however, made the fatal mistake of failing to use their maximum force with sufficient persistence to achieve

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their object. If they had obeyed this elementary maxim, and if the majority of the aircraft had succeeded in reaching the target—and even on the worst night of the blitz they failed—London might really have been set in flames. The main effect of this campaign, in spite of all its real strain, was to stiffen people's resolution so that they took such invasions of their liberty as the registration and compulsory National Service of women with astonishing composure. They refused to blemish at clothes rationing which was announced on June 1st; and the German leaflets dropped on East Anglia warning the people of the starvation that awaited them at the end of the year were regarded as valuable souvenirs. Britain was mobilizing her resources rapidly, and the main criticism to be heard was that it was not sufficiently drastic or swift. On August 27th the Government took over the main railways for the duration of the war for £43 millions per annum. The Home Guard which had begun by a sort of spontaneous combustion had now reached a total of one and three-quarter millions and was able to carry out realistic manœuvres with over a million men. Indeed Britain was justified of its children in those days.

One inference from the results of the German air campaign was that only the most widespread, heaviest and most continuous attacks created any real problem of repair. This was put to profit in planning the strategic bombing which inevitably became the central feature of British strategy after the fall of France. Between the opening of the Russian campaign and the end of the year, Bremen, Wilhelmshaven, Hamburg and Kiel were the objective of series of consecutive night attacks, as well as the Ruhr, Emden, Cologne, Karlsruhe, Magdeburg, Hanover, Munster and Frankfurt. Stuttgart, Nuremberg, Duisburg, Düsseldorf and Stettin were also heavily raided. Cherbourg and the German warships at Brest and St. Nazaire figured among another group of objectives of the R.A.F.; and not even Turin, Genoa and Naples escaped. At the time the effect of this campaign could not be measured; but it increased as the raids gained in weight and accuracy; and by weakening production, diverting fighters from the

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Russian front and compelling the retention in Germany of a considerable body of men for anti-aircraft defence—Britain had to allocate nearly half a million to this purpose—it certainly assisted the Russians to cope with the German offensive.

There was little evidence of a pause in the German onslaught upon Russia; but the main force was directed upon Moscow in the resumed offensive in October, and it seemed scarcely possible that any anvil could escape destruction under the hammer blows of what Hitler described in his Order of the Day as the 'last great decisive battle of the year'. The Order was not made public until October 10th and, on the preceding day, Dietrich, the head of the Nazi Press Bureau, informed foreign correspondents 'The final decision has been reached....' It is difficult to appreciate now the effect of such a declaration. It seemed to confirm the misgivings of the highest military authorities in the United States and in Britain. But, fortunately, it was not long before the Allies' doubts were resolved.

For the destruction of the main armies before Moscow and the encirclement and capture of the capital, a tremendously powerful army was concentrated on the sector between the Moscow-Riga line and the Kursk-Kiev line. Moscow, the main territorial objective, is, and was, at once a great industrial centre, the main nodal point in the Russian communications and the symbol of the country's power; but the fighting raged over the 800 miles from the Valdai hills to the Black Sea, and the attack secured immediate successes which to the Germans appeared decisive. But, following the usual rhythm of the blitz offensive, it lost impetus in about a fortnight; and a pause was necessary to recharge the machine.

Bock's armies, in swift co-ordinated movement, contrived to trap two great Russian forces. Guderian's panzer army, moving rapidly through Trubchevsk on Orel cut the main road and railway from Briansk as Weichs's 2nd army moved against the city from the west and Kluge's 4th army moved up the road to Medin and Podolsk. Yeremenko's troops at Briansk were thereby threatened with envelopment; and the

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same tactics cast a loop about Boldin's army at Vyasma, on the Smolensk line to Moscow. Rokossovsky, covering the Rzhev sector, was only in a less desperate plight. Nowhere, however, did the Russians surrender a position without a struggle that became more bitter, more prolonged and more exacting; and, as the battle dragged on, *Pravda* described the Russian tactics as 'to exhaust and wear down the German divisions'. And yet, as the Germans pressed in on Moscow, it seemed to anxious observers that the suggestion of attrition merely put a varnish on a fundamental inferiority.

Indeed, when the Germans declared the termination of the battles of Vyazma and Briansk, on October 18th, they claimed the capture of 648,196 prisoners, 1,197 tanks and 5,229 guns. Even if we discount the detail as being necessary to justify Dietrich's lyrical outburst, it is clear that the Panzer armies of Hoeppner, Hoth, Reinhardt and Guderian had punched great holes in the Russian front; and by October 20th the Germans were less than seventy miles from Moscow. The manœuvring area had dangerously shrunk. But a comparative respite had now been secured.

In the south, the Russians had not yet been able to stabilize the front. The position was still deteriorating rapidly. The Germans broke through Mariupol and, by the 19th, Kleist was in Tagenrog. The Donetz basin was being overrun. Khar-kov fell; and, though denuded of all its plant, its loss was a mortgage on the Russian recovery. On the same day the attack on the Crimea was resumed; and in a few days, Pere-kop, one of the most powerful defensive positions in Europe, was overrun. Odessa, after a two-months' siege, was evacuated; and Marshal Antonescu declared the incorporation of a considerable 'Transnistria' into Rumania.

The Russian Government and Diplomatic Corps had been evacuated some 550 miles to Kuibyshev and, on October 19th, a state of siege in Moscow was proclaimed. Zhukov, the ablest soldier Russia produced, was placed in charge of the outer defences of the city. Timoshenko was transferred to the south. Budyonny and Voroshilov were withdrawn to train reserve armies. Marshal Shaposhnikov became

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chief of staff; and Russia settled down for the final test of her strategy.

The Germans now began to make tactical preparations for the great envelopment which was to justify their claims at the last hour. Attacks were developed on the flanks, about Kallinin and Tula. Fog, rain and snow had already begun to hamper movement; but the Germans, though flung back across the Nara, less than forty miles from Moscow, were able to break through from Rzhev to Volokolamsk; and they began their prolonged attack on Tula. They opened on Moscow the day and night bombing which was their customary prelude to immediate attack.

On the southern and northern flanks of the attack successes were still being achieved. By November 9th the Germans were at Yalta, on the south coast of the Crimea, and were striking against the defences of Sevastopol. Before the end of the third week of November, they had even reached Kerch and compelled the Russians to withdraw across the Strait. And, in the resumed advance along the shore of the Sea of Azov Kleist reached Rostov, on November 22nd, and seemed poised for a descent upon the Caucasus. In the north, a surprise night attack had captured Tikhvin, on the Vologoda railway, and thereby cut the last link of supply to Leningrad.

Such was the background of the last offensive against Moscow which only Bock, among the High Command, supported. The final attack opened on November 16th, and in a week, the Germans reached Klin and pressed down the road to Podsolnechaya. They penetrated to Dimitrov (less than 40 miles) to Yakhroma (35 miles) to Gorki (29 miles) and even to Kabyushki (22 miles) north of Moscow. The northern arm of the pincers seemed to be closing down towards the rear of the capital. Finding Tula impregnable, the Germans pressed north of it to Kashira, less than sixty miles east of Moscow; and they captured a group of towns east of Tula. Heavy snow had fallen in the Moscow area on November 24th; but the attacks were renewed the next day. Narofominsk, only just over forty miles west of the capital, on the Maloyaroslavets road, was reached, and to the north-east, between the Mo-

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jaisk and Volokolamsk roads, the town of Zvenigorod, some twenty-two miles west of Moscow. The last defences seemed to be crumbling.

At the moment when final collapse seemed imminent a rift of light appeared in the south. The counter-offensive, which Timoshenko was directing in the Donetz, had carried the Russians seventy miles westward and Rostov was threatened from the north. Two days later, after a heavy battle, Kleist abandoned the city, and by December 2nd he had been driven westward through Tagenrog and Mariupol. It was clear that the Germans had shot their bolt; and the same lesson was soon evident on the central front. The Russians had fought through these critical days with more composure than the Allies could feel, frequently driving the Germans out of hardly won positions in heavy counter-attacks. On December 5th, the attack was still being pressed towards the outskirts of Moscow. The next day Zhukov, who had used his reserves sparingly and only under necessity, put them into a large-scale counter-attack; and the Germans began to give way. On the 8th they announced that the eastern offensive was suspended for the winter because of the weather. That day Tikhvin was recaptured, and the Russians were again able to supply besieged Leningrad across the ice of Lake Ladoga; that day, too, the Germans were driven from the Tula-Moscow road, and the Russian counter-offensive spread over the front. That day, also, the war had been given another revolutionary turn by the attack on Pearl Harbour.

The Germans, by discipline, tactical skill, and a clear mechanical (though not numerical) superiority in the air, had overrun an immense area, captured an extraordinary number of prisoners and men of military age, and valuable mineral deposits and potential agricultural supplies. But their strategic aim had eluded them and the price they had been compelled to pay was beyond their means;¹ and now, when mere economy as much as humanity suggested the prudence of retreat into winter quarters, out of reach of the enemy, Hitler left

¹ Hitler announced the German casualties from June 22nd to December 1st as 162,314 killed, 577,767 wounded and 33,334 missing.

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them to suffer the appalling conditions of the Russian winter, ravaged incessantly by troops inured to it. The winter had fallen three weeks earlier than usual; and it is one of the many ironies of the war, that the Yugoslav defiance, which had produced so little immediate impression on the Germans, may have paid compound interest in the end by delaying the onset of the attack on Russia just long enough to permit the Russian winter to intervene decisively. The Russian historic stubbornness, flair for strategy and enlightened adoption of the mechanical developments of modern warfare, with the appropriate tactical implications, had done the rest.

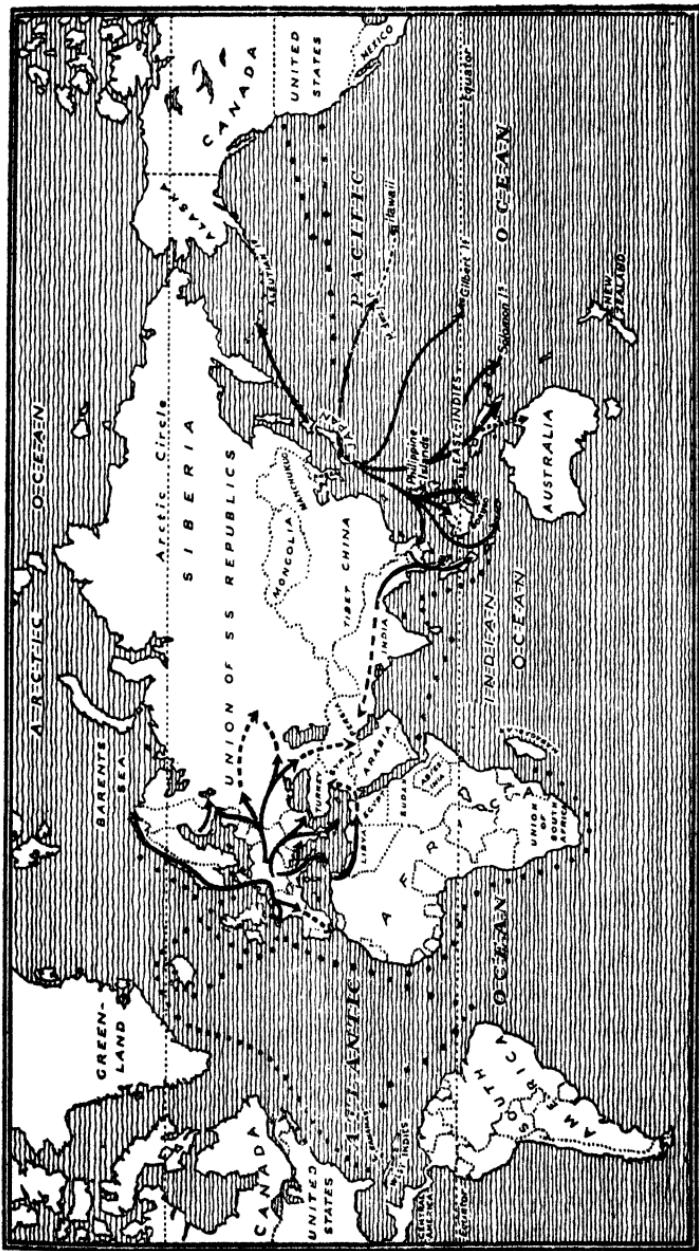
Chapter Four

THE WATERSHED OF THE WAR

December 1941–May 1943

The check before Moscow became clear at the moment when Japan threw down the gauntlet in the Pacific; and the strategic effect of neither event was at once appreciated. The former seemed to impose a limit on Germany's success in Russia but the latter opened vistas which faded into the distance. Yet subsequent developments were to show that Germany was to press much nearer to her strategic goal and that Japan had raised against the Axis Powers the one combatant who could destroy them. Mr. Roosevelt could never have brought his country into the war so wholeheartedly and so swiftly, however much he had desired it, without the contemptuous blow at Pearl Harbour. But it was not only Japan which deliberately guided the fatal poniard to its own heart. Germany did the same when Hitler allowed himself to become entangled with the defences of Stalingrad.

The phase which began with Pearl Harbour crossed the watershed of the war. For some months disaster filled the sky. By August Germany was at the gates of Stalingrad and at the last milestone before the Nile, while Japan was pushing through the Owen Stanley mountains to the threshold of Australia and striving desperately to hold the south-eastern pivot of her forward positions in the Pacific. She had been decisively checked in the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway Island; but she had contrived to occupy the most westerly of the Aleutian Islands, thereby securing her most easterly pivot in the north and she had not abandoned the hope of re-establishing at Port Moresby and in the Solomons a breakwater



7. The Axis Plan

The full line shows the actual advances, the broken ones advances projected and the dotted lines the movements of Axis submarines.

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against the irruption from Australia of the gathering forces of the Allies.

In all four places the first ripples of the turn of the tide began to appear at about the same time. Though Stalingrad had still to undergo its supreme trial for some months, the end of August saw Hitler committed to a battle which offered all the odds to Stalin, gave him a fixed salient to strike at, thereby wiping out at a stroke the lack of mobility which was his main weakness, pushing more and more troops into the sacrificial fire. The end of August, too, saw Rommel make his last attempt to break through to the Nile, witnessed the march across the Owen Stanley range in New Guinea fail and falter until it faded away, and marked the successful American invasion of Guadalcanal. And a few months later, at Stalingrad, at Alamein, in New Guinea and in Guadalcanal, the turning tide was gathering force. By the end of this phase, the end of May 1943, the enemy was out of Africa and the Mediterranean was reopened; Russia had carried out a masterly offensive and thrown Germany back on the defensive; and the Allies were beginning to recoil in the Pacific. This phase also saw the growth in the strategic bombing of Germany, some spirited Commando raids, the great peaks in the sinking of Allied merchantmen and the earliest signs of shipbuilding overtaking the losses.

The temper of the phase may best be gathered from the issue of the Beveridge Report which reminded the world of its more enduring purposes. Whatever brutalities the times revealed—and they exceeded anything known in former wars—the numerous conferences and the renewed stirrings of old and wider hopes reflect the recognition that there were methods of settling differences of outlook better than those of war, even the nice ‘chivalrous’ war of which nice, chivalrous soldiers think and write.

Excuses can be found for any sort of action; and it is, therefore, otiose to attempt a white-washing of the Japanese military clique. Japan is not self-sufficient; few countries are. Britain cannot even live without drawing upon other

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countries to a greater extent than any country in the world. Japan is densely populated; but nothing like as much as England and Wales. Yet both these excuses are made for her incursions into Korea, Manchuria and China. The second followed logically from the first and the third from the second; and the war against China, begun in 1937, threatened to continue indefinitely. The one hope of ending it (once she had overrun the Chinese seaboard), was to cut off all outside help; and this entailed the shutting of the Burma Road and blocking imports from Indo-China. She gave her purpose an enlightened modern enamel by calling it the establishment of a 'Co-prosperity sphere'. She was the modern inventor of the term 'New Order'; and she was able to persuade herself that it was perfectly reasonable for her to impose it upon eastern Asia.

Mr. Churchill had agreed to the closing of the Burma Road for three months from July 1940. It was an unpalatable decision; but that was Britain's darkest hour, and it was with a sense of relief that everyone heard the Prime Minister, on the signature of the Tripartite Pact, on September 27th, announce that the agreement would not be renewed. Japan, he said, had not profited by the chance to effect a just and equitable settlement with China and the pact would even recognize her right to continue and extend the struggle. It was in July of the following year that Japan secured from the Vichy Government the right to occupy bases in Indo-China. The agreement was signed on July 29th; but the Japanese had anticipated it by landing in Indo-China the preceding day.

This was the real beginning of the Japanese war; for no one could mistake the purpose of occupying bases only a day's steaming from Singapore and aerodromes within easy striking distance of Malaya. M. Matsuoka had informed Herr Ribbentrop, the preceding March, that he had resisted the pressure to secure such bases 'since he was by no means willing to undertake anything that might betray Japanese intentions with regard to Singapore'. It was, therefore, not surprising that the United States at once 'froze' Japanese and (at the

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request of the Chinese Government) Chinese assets. Great Britain, the Dominions and the Dutch East Indies followed; and Great Britain also denounced all her commercial treaties with Japan from that of 1911 onwards. These actions were described in the Order of the Day, issued by the Army and Navy Commanders when Japan struck, as threatening the 'existence' of the Japanese Empire. Each step forward by Japan followed a logical sequence; but the reply of the United States, Great Britain and the Netherlands was equally logical. Japan set the course; and when General Tojo, the former chief of staff of the Kwantung Army, became Prime Minister in October, proposed terms to the United States that he knew were unacceptable and proceeded to increase taxation, the pointers were easy to interpret. Military expenditure, even before the fresh increase, amounted to 22½ per cent of the national income. War could be the only explanation; and the Domei Agency dotted the 'i's' and crossed the 't's'.

Moreover, Mr. Grew, the United States Ambassador in Tokyo, had been sending home warning reports all the year. He had even handed on the report that 'a surprise attack on Pearl Harbour was planned—in case of "trouble" between Japan and the United States'. In spite of these repeated warnings, and those which the staff issued to the local commanders, the attack on Pearl Harbour came as a complete surprise. How many of the defeats of the war were due to over-confidence! Here, at Pearl Harbour, there was no trace of recognition that any danger was to be feared. There was a large Japanese population in the Hawaii Islands and ships, aircraft, barracks lay lapped in perfect peace when, at 7.50 on the Sunday morning of December 7th, a squadron of dive-bombers flew low over the naval base of Pearl Harbour, some seven miles from Honolulu, on the island of Oahu. Incendiary shells and machine-gun bullets wrecked the aircraft on their runways. Few escaped and, of those which did, fewer could take off from among the blazing wreckage. A second wave dealt with the hangars; and while torpedo-bombers attacked the warships in harbour, dive-bombers, with high-flying bombers, struck at the garrison as they sped to their battle

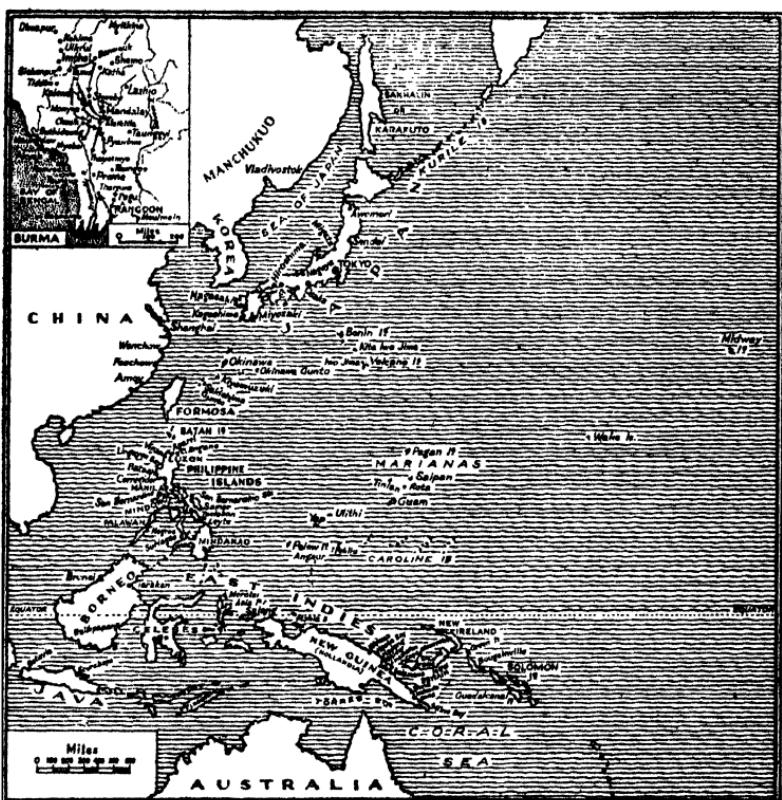
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stations. After half an hour's bombing, almost at will, the aircraft flew back to their carriers, refuelled and remunitioned and returned to round off the work. They met considerable opposition, on this occasion, but the work had been done. Of the eight battleships, *Arizona*, *California* and (the target ship) *Utah* were sunk; the *Oklahoma* was capsized; the *Nevada* was burning; and three others were more or less seriously damaged. The minelayer *Oglala*, lying in the berth of a battleship, was sunk. Three cruisers were damaged; two destroyers sunk and another was damaged. And there were 2,383 officers and men killed outright and some hundreds of the 1,842 wounded subsequently died. The Japanese lost, apparently, sixty aircraft; the Americans 173 destroyed and about 100 damaged.

The two commanders, after an investigation, were removed from their posts for 'a dereliction of duty'. But the result of this blow was to reduce to impotence for the time being the heavily fortified apex of the 'strategic triangle'; the Japanese apparently, while seeing the advantage of robbing the Americans of the bases in the Pacific, as far as they could, neglected the chance of adding a further hobble to the movement of recoil by failing to occupy the island.

The islands of Wake and Guam were reduced in spite of a valiant defence, in a few days; and the Japanese had secured that six-months' furlough in the Pacific which their strategy demanded. Naval strategists after the first world war held that logistics prevented a naval war in the Pacific, on the ground of the tremendous distances involved. Translated into simple terms this means the lack of the shipping and the aircraft to cover them, and the bases without which neither aircraft nor ships can operate. But the first two are matters of construction; and the United States has the greatest industrial potential in the world. Given them, the bases could be recaptured; and American ingenuity devised means of carrying the ships' bases (the 'Fleet Train') with them. In a short time, they could supply and fuel in mid-ocean and even carry out under-water welding. There is no trace of evidence that the Japanese ever considered this aspect of the situation; and yet, having forced the United States into the war so contemptu-

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8. The Far Eastern Theatre

ously, it could not fail to undermine the very basis of their strategic 'appreciation'. It could only be a matter of time before the Allies broke through their outer screen, which stretched between the western Aleutians and the Gilberts and Ellice Islands. It had been hoped to include Midway Island and the whole of Papua; but this proved impossible. But it was inconceivable that the United States would tire of attempting to recover the Japanese conquests or that they would be content to fight five or ten years to do so. Such speculations as these were voiced to Hitler and Ribbentrop in Berlin by M. Matsuoka.

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Hong Kong, Luzon, the main island of the Philippines, and Malaya were attacked at the same time as Guam and Wake Island. The first fell on Christmas Day. Its force—some 12,000 men under the Canadian Brigadier Lawson—was insufficient to defend the leased Kowloon territory on the mainland and, without it, Hong Kong could not be held. On December 12th, after the withdrawal to the island, a heavy bombardment was carried out. The next day the Governor refused a demand to surrender and the bombardment increased until the 18th, when after another summons to surrender had been refused, landings were effected in the dark. Skilfully infiltrating, the Japanese directed their attention to the island reservoirs. These were captured, the light failed and on Christmas Day the Governor surrendered with 10,947 troops. Prisoners and civilians at once experienced the real meaning of Japanese Bushido; and Mr. Eden was later forced to draw attention to the savagery of their treatment.

With the fall of Hong Kong, one of the great ports of the Empire passed into the hands of the enemy. But it was not long before greater disasters were experienced in the Philippines and in Malaya.

Luzon is the principal island of the Philippines archipelago which stretches from below Formosa to Borneo and the Moluccas, some 7,000 miles from America. They had been ceded to the United States after the Spanish-American war in 1899; and the Government, assured of complete independence in 1946, had accepted responsibility for defence. General MacArthur, a former chief of staff of the United States army, was in command when hostilities began, and he had at his disposal some 18,000 United States troops, 12,000 Philippine Scouts and 100,000 of the Philippine Army, partly trained and partly equipped. The American troops included the Air Corps, tank battalions and the garrison of the island Corregidor, which blocked the entrance to the fine Manila Bay. Of some 200 aircraft, thirty-five were Flying Fortresses (half of them in Mindanao), seventy-two first-line pursuit craft and the rest older aircraft.

The attack opened with an air raid on the airfields and

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ports. The Flying Fortresses and a great number of other aircraft were destroyed on the ground and landings were made, two days later, at Aparri, Vigan and Lingayen, in the north and north-west, at Legaspi in the south-east and below Manila Bay. From Lingayen, and from the north, converging columns were soon pressing down towards Manila and from the south an attempt was being made to cut the island forces in two. After a heavy battle north of Manila, General MacArthur succeeded in withdrawing them, intact, into the Bataan Peninsula by the end of the year. Manila was declared an open town on Christmas Day; but did not escape destruction. Bataan had long been reconnoitred, and there seemed some ground for the hope of a long defence; but, from the opening of the battle, the number of the refugees who fled into the peninsula compelled MacArthur to place the garrison on half rations. General Homma attacked repeatedly, and caused the defence to fall back step by step, until the second week in February. But, by this time, progress had proved so discouraging that General Homma was withdrawn and replaced by General Yamashita, fresh from his triumph in Malaya.

General MacArthur, after receiving on February 23rd an order to leave for Australia, handed over the command to General Wainwright on March 10th and a week later was in Australia. Wainwright was summoned to surrender, on March 21st; and, after careful preparation, Yamashita struck on April 2nd. Assaulted from the air and from the sea, by troops from the front and the sea flank, the defence surrendered on April 9th; and the 36,853 men were made to suffer for their stout defence. Corregidor surrendered on May 6th. A devastating preparatory bombardment wound to a climax on May 2nd and three days later landings were effected; and all was over except the customary savage revenge on the troops and civilians who fell into the hands of the Japanese. With Wainwright surrendered 11,574, of whom 1,269 were civilians; but Yamashita refused to accept the surrender, and threatened to destroy the prisoners, until Wainwright ordered the 'cease fire' in the whole of the Philippines. Japan gained cheaply many new bases in the South China Sea.

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These defeats took on the colour of victory against the background of the campaign in Malaya. The peninsula varies in length, from the irregular northern frontier, from 450 to 350 miles; and at its foot lies the island of Singapore on which had been constructed the strongest naval base in the world at a cost of £60 millions. It was always recognized that it was vulnerable from the side of the peninsula, that its defence would be, as Sir William Richmond put it, a 'field operation'; and it is, accordingly, the more astonishing that no training had been given in the tactics appropriate to fighting in the jungle which covers the bulk of Malaya. The country is the greatest source of rubber in the world and the rubber plantations provide the main breaks in the jungle; it is also a great source of tin. The east side of the peninsula is mainly jungle and swamp; the west, the cultivated side, separated from the east by a mountain ridge, has north and south roads; and is traversed by the main road and railway. The whole peninsula stems from the thirty-miles wide Kra Isthmus which is the southern offshoot of Siam. This country was invaded simultaneously with the attack on Malaya and, after a token resistance signed, on December 21st, an alliance with Japan. It was with Siam as a base, in addition to Indo-China, that the campaign in Malaya was carried out.

In Malaya, and in the Japanese campaigns in the South China Sea, the attack was first concentrated on the airfields. These captured, the ground advance could be covered and each forward step made the foundation of the next. It is, therefore, pertinent to remember that when the campaign opened there were only 141 operationally serviceable aircraft available for the defence, and these included no modern torpedo-bombers. The naval force included the *Prince of Wales* and the *Repulse* with three cruisers and eight destroyers. The ground force, under the command of Lieut.-General Percival, consisted of the 11th Indian division, the 9th Indian division, the 8th Australian division, under Major-General Gordon Bennett, and a considerable number of other troops. As the attack was carried out by the 5th Japanese division followed by the Imperial Guards and the 18th Japanese



9. The Malay Peninsula and Burma

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division, there was no numerical inferiority on the British side.

The opening Japanese air attack further reduced towards impotence the small British air force; and, from the advance against Kota Bharu, where the airfield was captured and the greater part of the 18th division landed in twenty-four hours, all went badly. The forces attacking from the Kra Peninsula, Singora and Patani were encountered beyond the frontier; but the British troops fell back in confusion when twelve medium tanks appeared. The country had been thought 'unsuitable for tanks'; and it was this factor that turned the scale.

But already disaster had come to seem inevitable. The *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* with three destroyers had put to sea on the night of the 8th with the intention of attacking the invasion flotilla; but finding his force discovered by Japanese aircraft Admiral Phillips turned back and set his course for Kuantan in consequence of a report that a landing was being attempted there. When sixty miles away, he was repeatedly attacked by torpedo-bombers and both the capital ships were sunk. It made little difference to the balance of sea power; but its moral effect was disastrous.

The British fell back, abandoning one position after another; and, even at the Slim river they were again beaten by the enemy's tanks. But this occurred on January 7th; and, three weeks before, the island of Penang, heavily bombed for a week, had been evacuated, with all its small craft, and even the broadcasting station, left intact. The 18th division had reached Kuantan; and with the heavy defeat at the Slim river the troops were withdrawn to northern Johore. At Gemas and at the Muar river attempts were made to stem the advance; but, on the morning of February 1st, the last of the 30,000 troops were piped across the causeway into Singapore. It was a week later that the Japanese effected landings in the island; and, in spite of some fierce attempts to hold them off, General Yamashita felt sufficiently assured on February 11th to summon the garrison to surrender. No reply was made; but in three days the reservoirs were captured and the military food reserves were almost exhausted. On the fol-

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lowing day, February 15th, General Percival surrendered with the 85,000 troops. Only three divisions of Japanese were identified; and it is doubtful if all were within the island. It was the most humiliating defeat ever suffered by British arms; and, however we examine it, the responsibility seems to run back to the command. The despatches appear to show that the command saw what was to be done, in training and the rest, but never saw that it was done.

By this time the Japanese navy had made great progress with the operations which were dominantly amphibious. Landings had been effected in Borneo and positions that commanded Java from the air were being systematically occupied. A powerful base was being created at Rabaul, in New Britain, from which to extend and consolidate the forward position. Landings had been effected in Amboina, at Lae in New Guinea and parachute troops had been dropped in Sumatra. Headway was already being made in the campaign in Burma.

Java was the next main objective after Malaya. It was there that Wavell had set up his headquarters and tried to rally the defence of the southern Pacific. As the Japanese edged their way nearer to the island, they were challenged in the battle of Macassar Strait by Dutch and American naval and air forces, which administered a sharp check. But a week later the advance was resumed; they invaded Amboina, a naval base second only to Surabaya; they landed at Macassar, in Celebes; they occupied Bali which is only a mile from Java. On February 27th the Battle of Java Sea was fought and the Allied fleet was almost wiped out. Two days later the Japanese invaded Java and in a week 93,000 Dutch troops with 5,000 British and Americans were compelled to surrender. Wavell had left only on February 25th; and, by the 9th, Dr. van Mook, the Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies was in Australia.

In Burma the position had from the outset been more desperate than that of Malaya. A hilly jungle country, with rail and river communications running in a north-south direction, and its main source of supply the port of Rangoon at the

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mercy of the dominant sea power, its land threat came from the east where, up to the latitude of Mandalay, Burmese territory joins that of Siam and Indo-China. Its defence lay in the hands of two divisions, half of the troops being either Burma Rifles or the Burma Frontier Force. The Japanese had superiority in the air and, though the main door from Siam, the Kawkareik Pass, was covered by the 16th Indian brigade, it was burst open with astonishing ease. The Moulmein area was evacuated and, between February 15th and 20th a heavy battle was fought on the Bilin river. The Japanese swiftly followed the retreating troops, crossing the Sittang river, after dealing with two brigades which had been left beyond the river with the bridges blown, and cut the Prome road. Lieut.-General Sir Harold Alexander took over the command from Lieut.-General Hutton in this hopeless position; and his first command had to be the evacuation of Rangoon on March 7th.

He skilfully extricated the troops and, with the two Chinese armies (the equivalent of two divisions) fell back to the north. Lieut.-General Slim (with 1st Burcorps) and General Stilwell ('Vinegar Joe') commanded the west and east columns, respectively, the latter consisting of the Chinese. The troops had to fight their way through road blocks north of Prome at the end of March and, when their thin front of forty miles was penetrated, Alexander, on the night of April 14th, had to order the destruction of the oil-fields at Yenangaung. But by this time the 6th Chinese army was threatened by a fresh Japanese thrust from north Siam. In the attempt to meet it the 6th army was dispersed at Taunggyi and the Japanese tanks entered Hsipaw and, the next day, stormed Lashio. Burcorps had, meanwhile, fought a heavy action to disengage north of Yenangaung and on April 30th withdrew beyond the Irrawaddy and destroyed the great Ava bridge. The next day they entered Mandalay, already in ruins from air attack.

Alexander's force had to fight off a small body of Japanese at the Chindwin, some miles below Kalewa, on May 10th; and guns, tanks and motor transport had to be destroyed as

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the rest of the journey had to be made by track. They had been on half rations with the stream of Indian refugees, men, women and children since May 4th; but by the end of the month they were across the Indian frontier. The Chinese 5th army, headed off from Myitkyina, reached Imphal about May 20th. The Japanese had already reached the Burma Road. Although as Stilwell said we had 'taken a hell of a beating', Alexander had managed to drag out the retreat long enough to give time for the defence of the Indian frontier to be completed and he had brought back more than four-fifths of the numbers sent into Burma. The Japanese success was due to their training in jungle fighting and their greater mobility; not because they possessed better communications or transport but because their needs made less demand upon them.

It was against this background, and the incursions of the Japanese into the Indian Ocean, that the Cripps mission tried and failed to secure the assent of India to the Cabinet's plan for the establishment of Indian independence. Sir Stafford Cripps arrived in India on March 22nd, the day before the Japanese occupied the Andaman Islands. On April 6th two ports north of Madras were bombed; the next day Japanese aircraft visited Trincomalee, in Ceylon; and the cruisers *Cornwall* and *Dorsetshire*, the carrier *Hermes*, the destroyer *Vampire* and the corvette *Hollyhock* were sunk. Well might a sceptical Mr. Gandhi say, 'We are being offered a post-dated cheque on a bank that is rapidly crashing'. The plan seemed, however, to give India all that she could reasonably claim; but, said Sir Stafford Cripps, the final letter of the Congress Working Party demanded 'true national Government with a Cabinet of Indian leaders, untrammelled by any control by the Viceroy or the British Cabinet' and this government by a 'set of persons nominated by Indian parties responsible to no Legislature or electorate' could not be accepted. The negotiations failed; and, on April 13th, he left Karachi for England. In the following July the All-India Congress sanctioned mass struggle on non-violent lines and arrests followed as usual.

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India was then providing 50,000 recruits to the Indian army and that month the number rose to 72,000.

By the time that the Burma campaign ended a more encouraging development had lightened the Far Eastern horizon. The United States navy, despite its stunning losses at Pearl Harbour, decided that its very weakness imposed upon it a policy of aggressiveness and found, as had Cunningham in the Mediterranean, that it paid handsome dividends. Indeed one may say that if the Japanese did not follow up its conquest of the Bay of Bengal by attacking the Cape route it was because of the daring raids of American task forces. Halsey, who was a sort of naval Patton, was absent when the blow fell on Pearl Harbour; but within two months he was raiding as far afield as if it had never happened. On January 31st he carried destruction into the Marshalls and the Gilberts. On February 24th he raided Wake Island. In just over a week he even turned his guns on Marcus Island, some 1,000 miles from Japan. And his was not the only force that was in operation. Rabaul was raided on February 20th, Lae and Salamaua on March 10th, Makin Island in the Gilberts on April 17th. The following day the most astonishing raid of all occurred. Tokyo, Yokohama and a number of other great cities in Japan were raided by medium land-based bombers from the carrier *Hornet*, though for some time 'Shangri La' (the name of Roosevelt's week-end retreat) was the only description of their *terminus a quo*.

Nevertheless by the beginning of May the Japanese were installed in Lae, Salamaua and Finschafen in eastern New Guinea, about 150 miles from Port Moresby and only 400 miles from Australia. The Government had for some time been anxious about the safety of the Commonwealth; but Mr. Churchill had been conducting in Washington conversations which took in the whole range of the war. It was in an address to Congress that he roused everyone's spirits by the truculent question, 'What kind of people do they think we are?' And, in Ottawa he commented on Weygand's fore-

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cast that 'In three weeks England will have her neck wrung like a chicken' in the words, 'Some chicken—some neck!' These words counted; but the visit was marked by work as well as wit; and, on January 1st, a Joint Declaration, accepting the Atlantic Charter and engaging co-operation and the making of a common armistice or peace was signed by the United States, Great Britain, Russia, China, the Netherlands, Australia, Belgium, Canada, Costa Rica, Cuba, Czechoslovakia, the Dominican Republic, Greece, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, India, Luxemburg, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Panama, Poland, Salvador, South Africa and Yugoslavia. Japan's challenge had united a great part of the world, outside the Axis, against the aggressors. It was further decided that Germany should have priority as an objective; and before the end of January there were United States troops in Ulster.

The needs of the Pacific theatre were thoroughly considered. Indeed, among many people in the United States to the end of the war, that was the main war. The United States navy had taken the Pacific for its parish; and General MacArthur was in Australia from the third week of March to command the Australian forces and American reinforcements which were pouring into that country for an Allied offensive. While, therefore, the Japanese were intent on consolidating their hold on New Guinea and the Solomons with a view to cutting the communications of America with the Commonwealth, the Allies were gradually building up their strength to make them immune and carry the war outside Australia's borders.

It was in pursuance of her objective that, at the beginning of May, Japan concentrated for an invasion at Florida Island in the Solomons. On May 4th Rear-Admiral Fletcher learned from the report of the heroic "Coast Watchers" of an invasion fleet lying in the harbour of Tulagi, the capital of Florida. His task force was built about the carrier *Yorktown*; and he at once attacked with bombers. The enemy was taken by surprise and twelve ships were destroyed or damaged with six aircraft for a loss of only three American air-

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craft. He then concentrated with the rest of his force which included the carrier *Lexington*. Stationing a force to intercept any ships making for Port Moresby, on May 7th he attacked the main fleet in the Louisiade archipelago. The carrier *Shoho* and a heavy cruiser were sunk. Meanwhile his own force had been discovered and attacked by a considerable number of Japanese aircraft. The destroyer *Sims* was sunk, the tanker *Neosho* was so severely damaged that she survived only a few days and the carrier *Lexington* received such damage that she later exploded and sank while the carrier *Yorktown* was also damaged. At the end of the battle the Japanese had lost a carrier, three heavy and one light cruisers, two destroyers and a number of transports and another carrier and some twenty vessels were damaged. And, of course, the invasion project was nipped in the bud. The Allies lost sixty-six aircraft as well as the three ships. So ended 'the battle of the Coral Sea', the first naval battle in which the surface vessels did not exchange a shot.

On June 3rd another similar battle was fought off Midway Island. On that afternoon a Japanese force was reported approaching from the south-west and the following day another from the north. Admiral Nimitz, however, had correctly foreseen the Japanese reactions to the check in the Coral Sea, and he had concentrated as heavy a force as he could spare at Midway. Accordingly the Japanese ships were at once attacked by Flying Fortresses, naval torpedo-aircraft and Marine dive-bombers; but while the American aircraft were dealing with the Japanese ships enemy aircraft attacked Midway itself and were met by the out-of-date Brewsters and anti-aircraft fire. More than half of the fighters were lost; but forty-three Japanese planes were shot down and damage to the island airfield was limited. The attack on the Japanese ships without fighter cover suffered very heavily. But the four Japanese carriers were destroyed, though not before the *Hiryu* had so severely damaged the *Yorktown* that she had to be abandoned and when salvaged was sunk by a submarine. It was poetic justice that the *Hiryu* was itself so severely damaged by aircraft from the carriers *Enterprise* and *Hornet* that she

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sank the next day. On June 5th the Japanese, in full retreat, were attacked by carrier aircraft and two heavy cruisers were sunk. The total estimated losses were four carriers, two heavy cruisers and three destroyers sunk, three battleships, three cruisers and several destroyers damaged, in addition to the 275 aircraft destroyed. In a gallant fight against heavy odds ninety-two American officers and men were lost, in addition to the *Yorktown* and the destroyer *Hamman*.

This was the second naval battle in which the surface vessels did not exchange a shot; the second attempted invasion that was foiled and, falling upon a fleet already so much weakened in carriers, it put an end to the Japanese initiative in the Pacific. It put an end also to the normal conception of the fleet as an operational unit. The 'task force', generally built about one or more carriers, replaced it. At Midway Island a naval break out of the Bay of Bengal was finally checked; and, with Japan's loss of her initial advantage in carriers, she finally lost the chance of ever again equalling the United States carrier fleet. American industrial potential began to dominate the war in the Far East almost exactly six months after Japan had ignorantly challenged it.

It was under cover of this action that Japan delivered a heavy raid on Dutch Harbour, the American naval and air base in Unalaska, Aleutians, and occupied Attu and Kiska, two of the westernmost islands of the Aleutian group. It was a barren success, for Dutch Harbour, some 800 miles to the east, was the one strong base in the Aleutians; and only a year later the precarious hold on Attu and Kiska was brusquely terminated.

The meaning of the victories in the Coral Sea and at Midway was not at once appreciated. Admiral Somerville had now a strong squadron based on the Maldives and it seemed only prudent to attempt the occupation of Madagascar, which lies on the flank of the Cape route, off the coast of Africa. The port of Diego Suarez was captured after two days fighting, on May 7th; but operations had to be resumed in September when the occupation of the island was completed. On November 5th, the Vichy Governor General surrendered and

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the island was handed over to the Fighting French who later occupied Reunion Island, some 380 miles to the east.

The Cape route was thus made secure; and it was of vital importance to the safety of the Near East, now become the flank of the Russian struggle. Its importance grew with the German realization of the vital role played by Malta in the communications which supplied Libya. At the beginning of 1941, indeed, a strong force of Luftwaffe had been sent to Sicily, and its intervention soon made the supply of Malta more and more precarious. The island was incessantly attacked but it remained to the end the 'unsinkable aircraft carrier'; and its effect upon Rommel's operations was increasingly prohibitive until the Luftwaffe and reinforced submarine fleet turned the scale for some critical months. The fall of Crete had given the Germans another base only 200 miles from Tobruk. Yet in this besieged port, without fighter cover and repeatedly bombed, the garrison behaved so aggressively that they immobilized four Italian and one German divisions. They provided themselves with minefields by plundering the Italian mine-belts by night and, in the darkness, patrolled and mapped all the mined foreground. By simulated attack they compelled the enemy to disclose his gun positions. The enemy was kept 'continually in a high state of tension'. Rommel could not ignore Tobruk, but neither could he take it; and General Auchinleck had its relief as his first duty. But his eye looked far beyond the garrison of Tobruk and, as his resources were swelled by the release of troops engaged in Italian East Africa, he planned to drive the enemy out of Libya and capture Tripoli.

It was in such conditions that the fighting in Cyrenaica developed in the autumn. But one other condition intervened to sway the result. It was about that time that the navy sank to its lowest depth. On September 27th the *Nelson* was put out of action for six months by having her bows blown in by a torpedo. On November 13th the *Ark Royal* was sunk by another torpedo. The *Barham* in less than a fortnight followed; and as we have seen the *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* were

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destroyed off Malaya. On December 19th *Valiant* and *Queen Elizabeth* were sent to the bottom of Alexandria harbour, and put out of action for several months, by limpet bombs. Thus the force in the Mediterranean was reduced to a few cruisers and destroyers; and the supply of Malta was compromised even further. It was later in the year that the situation was eased by the flying into Malta of Spitfires from the American carrier *Wasp*.

General Auchinleck established the Eighth Army in October; and when it struck its first blow against the enemy, on November 18th, under General Cunningham, the chances seemed bright. Lieut.-General Godwin-Austen was in command of the XIIIth corps comprising the New Zealand division, the 4th Indian division and the 1st Army Tank brigade; Lieut.-General Norrie's XXXth corps included the 7th Armoured division, the 4th Armoured Brigade Group, the 1st South African division (two brigades) and the 22nd Guards (Motor) Group; the Tobruk garrison, commanded by Major-General Scobie, was composed of the 70th division, the 32nd Army Tank brigade and the Polish Carpathian Infantry Brigade Group. Against this force Rommel had the 15th and 21st Panzer divisions, the 90th Light division and seven Italian divisions, one of them the Ariete Armoured division and another the Trieste Motorized division. Cunningham had 'superiority in numbers'. But in weapon power the advantage lay with the enemy. With fewer tanks (412 against 455) but nearly three times as many anti-tank guns, he had a clear superiority of range. His guns were mainly of 50 mm. calibre (with some of 75 mm.), and these used a four and a half pound shell against the British two-pounder. In the air the Germans were numerically superior; but during the preparatory period the work of destroying Rommel's supply lines was devastating; and the attacks embraced Gazala, Bardia and Tmimi, during November.

"Operation Crusader" lasted until January 7th; but it was so swiftly followed by Rommel's riposte that the two make one. Cunningham's plan was to cut off the whole enemy force, compel his armour to fight by seizing the vital Sidi

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Rezegh ridge and, when it was engaged, to move out the XIIIth corps and attack from Tobruk. For the first three days all went well as surprise was complete; and on the 19th the 7th Armoured brigade was north of Sidi Rezegh and the Support Group was in occupation. But the 22nd Armoured brigade suffered heavy damage in its clash with the Ariete division at El Gubi, and the 4th Armoured brigade was engaged with about sixty German tanks at Gabr Saleh. The Germans withdrew; but when, the next day, they returned in force the 22nd brigade was called back from El Gubi; and once again the enemy withdrew.

So far, apart from a dispersion which offered odds to the enemy, the action had gone well and the Tobruk garrison had been ordered to break out; but on November 21st the German armour from Gabr Saleh joined the infantry and tanks which were attacking the troops at Sidi Rezegh. The 22nd and 4th Armoured brigades were sent up and joined in the battle. Meanwhile the 5th South African brigade was being held up south of Sidi Rezegh and the XIIIth corps had moved out and cut off Capuzzo. By the 23rd, after confused fighting over an extensive area, the Sidi Rezegh position was lost and the 5th South African brigade had been destroyed by tanks. Success of the plan had needed concentration; and, after the first day, the force had been dispersed. On the 24th Rommel's situation was little better than Cunningham's and to relieve it he sent his two Panzer divisions through the British units to Sheferzen, on the frontier. He created astonishing confusion, but he was checked by the cool stand of the Indian division and hammered incessantly from the air. His hope was to force Cunningham to abandon the offensive and retire to the frontier; and finding that he was suffering damage without arresting the attack, he turned back.

But it was Auchinleck whose insistence compelled Cunningham to maintain and develop the pressure on the enemy; and, on his return to Cairo, he replaced Cunningham by Major-General Ritchie from his staff. The struggle for Sidi Rezegh was resumed. It was taken by the New Zealand division and a junction effected with the Tobruk garrison, only

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for both successes to be reversed. On December 2nd Ritchie concentrated his forces for the capture of the El Adem-Sidi Rezegh ridge; and, at length, after some heavy fighting at El Gubi, the troops linked up with the 70th division from Tobruk and, on December 8th, Rommel fell back to the west, abandoning his frontier garrisons.

He was followed up but, even under pressure, did not leave Gazala until the 16th; and he had to be forcibly ejected from one position in Cyrenaica after another. Only on January 7th did he abandon Agedabia for Agheila. Meanwhile his frontier garrisons were being captured. Bardia was taken by the 2nd South African division and Halfaya surrendered a fortnight later. The enemy lost 24,000 killed and wounded, and 36,000 prisoners against a British loss of some 18,000.

The confusion and colour escape from so short a description, and it is not easy to avoid the conclusion that Rommel's retreat was a tactical move. For a fortnight after he had left Agedabia he advanced again with 100 tanks in three columns which surprised the weak forces and re-entered Benghazi a week later. The British troops fell back before him, but ten days later brought his advance to a halt about Gazala. The recoil did not, as might appear, turn the tables. A net loss of some 40,000 troops, including some 21,000 Germans, is not to be ignored. The most serious effect for the Allies was the loss of the airfields in western Cyrenaica. Ritchie was neither ready to advance nor to withstand a prepared attack by a born tactician such as Rommel.

It was indeed a dark and gloomy winter for the Allies and particularly for Britain. The collapse of Singapore and the overrunning of the islands in the southern Pacific, the fall of Rangoon and the entry of Japan into the Bay of Bengal were serious shocks to Britain's pride. And even British waters were not immune. In the second week of February the *Scharnhorst*, *Gneisenau* and *Prinz Eugen*, with destroyers and powerful air cover, steamed through the Channel without the naval or air forces, despite gallant attempts, being able to check them. It was, as we have seen, the navy's darkest hour. And, farther afield, the plight of Malta persistently attacked by German

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and Italian aircraft, grew steadily graver. At times as many as 300 aircraft attacked in a single day; and the people took to living underground. They even built cinemas in caves. No island, no area of comparable size, ever suffered such an ordeal; and the Governor of Malta was compelled to inform General Auchinleck that 'even on siege rations, supplies would last only until June while stocks of diesel oil for submarines were sufficient only for two months'. It was in April that the *Wasp*, a carrier lent by the United States, flew in Spitfires which made a revolutionary change in the situation. That month the George Cross was awarded to Malta, a recognition of service and valour that was deserved as much as any such reward has ever been.

In spite of all, the common round of life in war-struck Britain went on. There were changes in the Government. The National Service Acts extended liability to men up to the age of forty-five; and the Allies developed their organization for co-operation. The Chiefs of Staff Committee and an Anglo-United States Combined Raw Materials Board were set up in Washington. In Britain a Pacific Council with representatives of Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and the Netherlands East Indies and a Combined Shipping Adjustment Board began to function. Representation of the Dominions in the War Cabinet was arranged; and the Allies set themselves to deal with the problems before them.

One, in many ways the most disturbing of these, was always in the foreground. Russia had weathered the terrific attacks of Germany in the summer and autumn campaigns, and was now waging her first winter campaign against the enemy who had fallen back into the advanced supply depots on the Russian communications. He had to be forced back before Russia could breathe freely even in Moscow. The dismissal of Brauchitsch, Halder, Rundstedt, Leeb, Guderian and Kleist is the clearest admission of failure in the major sense. But the Russian commanders had to fight with versatile skill and pertinacity to clear the salients which threatened Moscow from

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the north and south. By the tenth day of the campaign the Serpukhov-Tula road had been cleared; and a host of places, lost in painful and costly battles, had been recaptured. The northern salient required a longer operation; but by December 14th Klin had been recovered, after five days desperate fighting, and Kalinin followed two days later. A beginning had been made in clearing the neighbourhood of Moscow to the west; and it was farther south that the greatest success of the campaign was obtained when, on December 30th, after a week's struggle, Kaluga was recovered.

This was certainly one of the great 'igels'—'hedgehogs'—that the Germans intended to retain. These 'igels' were the joints of a skeleton built on the Russian communications. They were of some size and, preferably at junctions, capable of defending themselves in every direction. They were 'boxes', the elements of a defensive which the British were about to adopt in Cyrenaica. (The Germans later even devised a moving-box tactics—'Mot-Pulk' as they called it.) Into these 'hedgehogs' Hitler drew back his troops to provide shelter and security, when he had rejected the advice of his generals to fall back and leave the scorched earth belt to the Russians; but it is to be doubted whether he saved anything except his own face. The sufferings of the troops during the Russian winter for which no provision had been made may be gathered from two significant facts. Up to February 20th there were 112,627 cases of frostbite, about 12 per cent of the total German casualties up to that time. Of these 14,357 were most serious cases, a high percentage of which necessitated major amputations. Add to these the number of cases of pneumonia and other diseases consequent on exposure and the meaning of Hitler's words on April 26th become intelligible. 'Only when nerves were at breaking-point, obedience wavered or where a sense of duty was lacking in mastering the task,' he said, 'I made stern decisions. . . .'

These two facts, the casualty lists and the failure of discipline in face of them, suggest the magnitude of the ordeal which the German troops were called upon to undergo. Indeed, on the figures given in the *Goebbels Diaries*, the casualty

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rate, even killed, wounded and missing, between December 1st and February 20th was about half that of the period of the German advance; and there are no reliable figures of the sickness rate. The winter saw the mass attrition of the German troops.

The Germans were attacked over the whole front. Only by the use of cavalry, of skis for troops and for light artillery, of sledges drawn by horses or dogs, or of aero-sledges, were the Russians able to cope with the conditions. But by such means they cleared the country up to the Volkov river and up to the Lovat, including Kholm, and invested Rzhev from the west. This 'hedgehog' had frequently to depend for supply on Junkers 52—'Frau Ju' as the Germans called it—and yet, with Gzhatsk and Vyasma, gripped in a pincers, it held out against all attacks. Other 'hedgehogs' also had to depend upon 'Frau Ju' at times, for the partisans frequently cut the communications with the home bases. In January, Maloyaroslavets and Mojaisk, immediately west of Moscow, were reoccupied; and for the first time Moscow breathed freely. A railway had been laid across the frozen Lake Ladoga so that the Leningrad siege was eased; but it was not yet raised; and in April, with the thaw, the full vigour of the siege revived. A prolonged battle was fought about Staraya Russa which culminated in the cutting off and destruction of a considerable part of the German 16th army; and farther south the Russians captured Yukhnov, Kirov and Sukhinichi. By so doing they pushed out a salient threatening Smolensk from the south, and raids penetrated from the north to within a few miles of it.

In southern Russia they advanced through the Donetz, and on January 27th captured the important junction of Lozovoia, only eighty miles south of Kharkov. They captured Kerch, Feodosia and Eupatoria in the Crimea; but could not raise the siege of Sevastopol. And at the end of March the thaw broke and ended the reign of terror under which the Germans had maintained their astonishing defence. Their brutality to the Russians in occupied territory could have been expected after the peace horrors of their concentration camps. Europe, indeed, passed under the German harrow

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during these months. But the Germans certainly knew soldiering.

And then, on May 7th,¹ they began to move in the Crimea. General Manstein's XIIth Army attacked the Russian entrenched positions on the isthmus of Kerch. The Germans badly wanted a victory to offset the long winter suffering; and success was, therefore, announced some time before it was won. But it was evident from the first that the price alone was in doubt; and, by May 16th, Kerch was captured. Four days later the isthmus was cleared. There remained only Sevastopol; and the final attack was made to wait upon the outcome of the operations in the neighbourhood of Kharkov. The Russians knew the German plan for their summer campaign. In spite of the announcement in the *Frankfurter* that the attack would be made on the central front and the subsequent official reprimand, in spite of the inspired indiscretions of German agents, the true plan leaked out. The objective was the reduction of the Russian forces to impotence by cutting off the industries, and the grain and oil that kept them in being. To attain this purpose the main blow must be delivered in the south, and success entailed the immobilization of the forces that might forbid or imperil the safety of such a movement. Accordingly it was designed to cut Moscow off from the east, sever its main communications and then neutralize it, while striking south to Baku. 'The German staff planned to be in Borisoglebsk, on the Vorona, 250 miles east of Kursk, on July 10th, in Stalingrad on July 25th, in Saratov by August 10th, in Kuibyshev by August 15th, in Arzamas, 240 miles east of Moscow by September 10th and in Baku by September 25th.'²

This clearly indicated that the major blow would fall on the southern front, between Kursk and the Sea of Azov; and Marshal Timoshenko struck on May 12th a blow that would, if successful, cut the core out of this operation. His objective was Kharkov which is second only to Moscow as a Russian communications centre. In spite of the stubborn defence of

¹ This is the date given by Hitler.

² *To Stalingrad and Alamein* by the author, p. 131.

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General Schwoedler's troops the Russians, using KV tanks, made considerable progress in the first few days. They were able to cross the upper Donetz in the neighbourhood of Kharkov and even to penetrate into its outskirts on the 16th. On the same day they captured Krasnograd, on the Kharkov-Kherson railway. But then the advance began to falter; and on the 19th the Germans struck back. The Russian advance had created a vulnerable flank and the Germans threatening its centre compelled the Russians to evacuate Krasnograd and cut off a considerable body of troops. Schwoedler struck again on June 10th, and a third time, on June 22nd, and on this occasion he captured the most important local centre of communications in Russian hands, Kupyansk. The operation had been costly for both sides; but, by the end of May, it was clear that the Russians would be at least held, and Manstein opened his attack on Sevastopol. It was smothered with shell and constantly bombed from the air; but it was exactly a month from the opening of the assault before it was evacuated on July 3rd, after a siege of 250 days.

Meanwhile Bock had opened the main summer offensive from Kursk, on June 28th, and in three days had broken through the defences barring the way to Voronezh. The fighting was then extended to the Kharkov sector. By July 5th the outskirts of Voronezh had been reached, and in three days Weichs's army had entered the old city. But there they were held; and in ten days of fierce fighting this, the door to Borisoglebsk, was never forced. The fighting continued for a month, before even the northern flank could be pinned down there; and, by that time, Hitler had allowed events to change his plan fundamentally. Hoth's 6th Army, with the 4th Panzer Army under General Paulus, had captured Rossosh, after two days fighting, on July 12th, and begun to race towards the Don bend which faces Stalingrad. Kleist's 17th Army passed through Millerovo the next day, on Hoth's flank; and Manstein, with Schwoedler's army, moved on Rostov. The Germans captured Tsimlyansk, crossed the lower Don, and moved on Kotelnikovo, on July 22nd. Three days later, by the time-table, they hoped to be in Stalingrad; but they were

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held at Kotelnikovo, on the Tikhoretsk railway to Stalingrad, and could make no headway until Hoth's army, following up the swiftly retreating Russians, had crossed the Don at Kalach on the direct line to Stalingrad, on August 15th. It was a fortnight before the Germans were able to attack Stalingrad directly; and the swiftness of the long advance persuaded them that it was about to fall. A month's repeated attempts to storm it, however, taught them a little more caution; and then, on October 15th, they began to reduce it to dust. This, however, did not improve their chances of redeeming Hitler's prestige by the capture of the city; but at this point reason was in abeyance.

Some time before this Hitler had made astonishing headway with his main purpose. Kleist had descended into the Caucasus. Rostov was evacuated only on July 27th; yet, on August 4th, he was at Voroshilovsk, half-way to the Grozny oilfields. Three weeks later he was in Mozdok, on the edge of the oilfields where, however, the Russians were in some strength. Already the Kuban area had been overrun. Maikop was reached on August 16th, eight days after the oilfields had been destroyed. The Russians had lost an immense area with vast essential resources; but the Germans had not gained them and, by abandoning their original plan, they offered a chance which Timoshenko was certain to seize. For though Bock disposed of about forty infantry divisions with some sixteen panzer divisions and perhaps a similar number of Hungarian, Italian and Rumanian divisions, Hitler was in the saddle. Stalingrad, in spite of the most desperate assault, was never entirely lost and, on November 19th, the Russian counter-offensive fell upon the salient of the city, in converging blows from north and south. Ten days earlier the Germans had been flung back from the head of the Trans-Caucasian military road and also from the Ossetian road.

The Stalingrad army—the 6th German Army of General von Paulus—had drained away the lifeblood of the force operating in the Caucasus. Now it was itself to be reduced to impotence after a bitter ordeal. It was cut off from the Don. It was hustled from north and south, gradually completely

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encircled, and the valiant defenders of Stalingrad joined in. Marshal von Manstein in the second week of December began to advance up the Kotelnikov railway to its relief; but he was not thoroughly under way before the Russians extended their offensive to the middle Don. General Golikov swiftly cut the Rostov railway while Vatutin moved westward on his left; and the reserves which might have saved Manstein and Paulus were drawn into this fresh open sector.

Manstein had to abandon the relief of von Paulus in the last week of the year; and the 6th Army was left to its fate. Winter had set in. Air transport could do little more than keep the troops alive, as they were steadily compressed into a shrinking area. On January 8th von Paulus was summoned to surrender and the formal attack opened two days later. There could only be one end. On the last day of the month von Paulus with sixteen other generals and the remains of the battered army surrendered. Eight more generals joined them two days later. Since January 10th, 91,000 officers and men had been captured. It was the most complete and most humiliating German defeat of the war. And that the tide had really turned on the Russian front was shown in striking successes on other sectors.

The battle of Stalingrad was lost in spite of the diversion of troops from the Caucasus; and now the troops had to be withdrawn from that area. They were evacuated with great skill and Rostov—the gateway—was not recovered until mid-February when the delicate operation was complete. But the Russian riposte had also recovered Schlüsselburg and reopened Leningrad's communications with the rest of Russia. Important centres like Velikie Luki and Demyansk fell; and, later in the year, the great defensive triangle of Rzhev-Gzhatsk-Vyazma was reduced. But more important still, under the co-ordinated movements of Golikov and Vatutin, Kursk and even Kharkov were recaptured. At the latter place, however, the Russians had offered hostages to fortune in a salient. Manstein seized his opportunity. The Russians were over-extended and their impetus had seeped out. Manstein was able to cut across the salient and, on March 15th, a

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month after its recovery, Kharkov had again to be abandoned to the Germans. Winter now began to yield to the spring thaws; and the fighting gradually died down, after a Russian recovery that was one of the most wonderful and decisive events of the war.

Though the events in the Russian theatre overshadowed those in Libya and the Far East, in these areas, too, the portents of irredeemable disaster during the first half of this phase had been blotted out by the happier signs that the Allies had crossed the watershed of the war. In Libya, indeed, disaster seemed to run neck and neck with Russia. A few terrible weeks of spring 1942 swept away all the familiar landmarks and opened vistas no one could face with equanimity. Rommel had ended his march back from Agheila at a point west of Gazala; and there, on a front of forty miles to Bir Hacheim, Ritchie arranged a series of defended areas or 'boxes', which were a free expression of the principle of the 'hedgehog', behind a dense minefield. In the north lay the 1st South African division with the 50th division on its left and the 1st Free French brigade holding Bir Hacheim. The first two, with the 2nd South African division, made up Gott's XIIIth corps. Norrie's XXXth corps included the 1st and 7th Armoured divisions, the 201st Guards brigade group (which held a 'box' about the 'Knightsbridge' crossroads) and three other brigades. Ritchie had a considerable numerical superiority in tanks; but some were slow 'I' tanks and the Grants had a limited arc of traverse. Rommel had six Italian infantry and two armoured divisions and the Afrika Korps: the 15th and 21st Panzer divisions and the 90th Light division. In addition he had a command of tactics which almost amounted to genius.

Ritchie planned to attack in the first week of June; and for some reason not explained—the oddest comment on the new tactical co-operation of the R.A.F. with the ground forces—only a single aeroplane was sent out on reconnaissance on May 26th, and it was shot down. As a consequence almost the first notice of imminent attack to be received was the sight of

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the Afrika Korps moving round the army's southern flank on the morning of May 27th. That day Rommel struck north with the Ariete Armoured division and the Afrika Korps under cover of a feint at Gazala¹ and a landing behind that position. The 7th Motor brigade and the headquarters of the 7th Armoured division were swiftly overrun and the enemy armour swept up to 'Knightsbridge' and reached the neighbourhood of El Adem. But the main, solid success was the cutting of two lanes through the minefields and the later storming of the 150th brigade position; for in the heavy fighting of the next few days these not only provided shorter communications but also the foundation of the bridgeheads he established west of 'Knightsbridge'—the 'Cauldron'. Under the impression that he was withdrawing Ritchie launched a counter-attack on the night of June 4th; and it failed so completely that Rommel decided to storm the Bir Hacheim position which had so far resisted all his efforts. On the night of the 10th the French brigade was withdrawn; and bitter tank battles developed about 'Knightsbridge' until the morning of the 14th when the Guards had to be withdrawn. This left the Gazala position exposed and the garrison were ordered to withdraw, the 50th division breaking through the Italian screen in front of it before turning south. General Auchinleck ordered Tobruk to be held; but under heavy bombardments and attack by dive-bombers, the 11th Indian brigade on the eastern sector was overrun and the harbour was cut off, with the bulk of the transport, before evening. The defence collapsed; and though some of the troops fought their way out, Tobruk fell on June 21st with between 20,000 and 30,000 prisoners and immense stores. Two days later Rommel was across the Egyptian frontier, Matruh was abandoned; and on the 30th the 8th Army was at El Alamein.

These events produced an immense shock throughout the world. 'A very black hour' was the comment of General Marshall, as he recognized the possibility of a complete collapse and the turning of the Russian southern front. But the troops rallied on the thirty-six miles from between El Alamein and

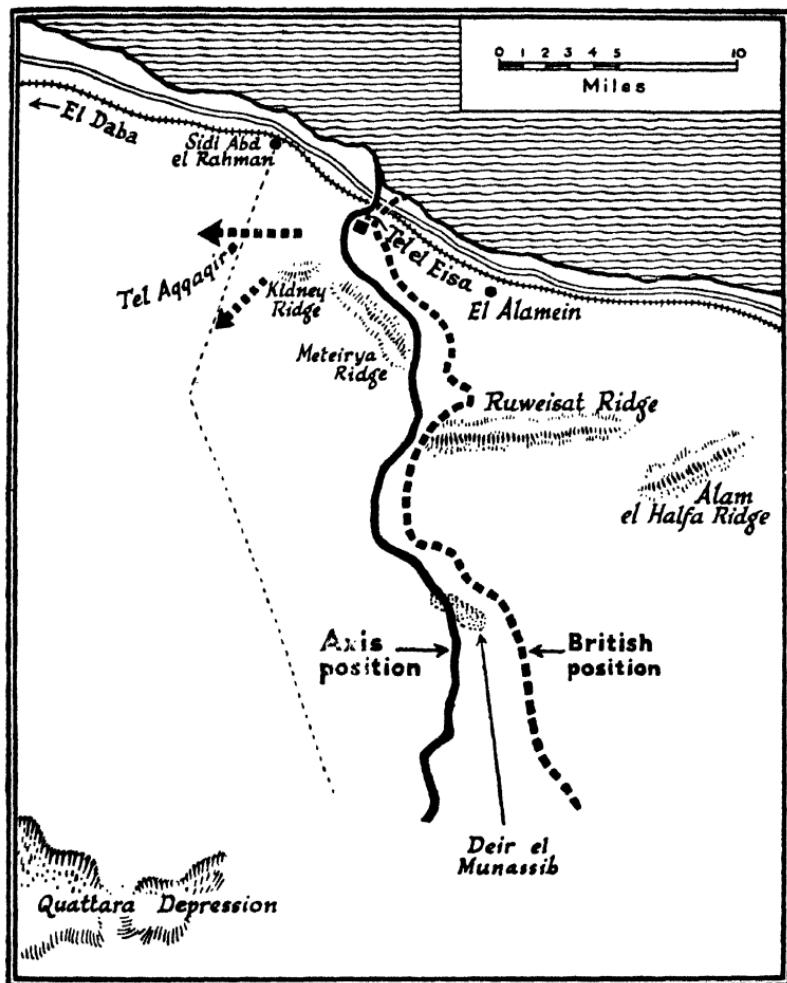
¹ See Map 3, p. 76.

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the Qattara Depression. Neither flank could be turned; and the troops beat off Rommel's attacks. Some sporadic skirmishing followed; and both sides then settled down until the end of August when Rommel made his final attempt to break through to Alexandria, only sixty-five miles to the east. General Auchinleck, who seems to have possessed all the gifts but the essential one of ability to choose the ablest subordinates, had by this time been replaced by General Alexander with General Montgomery as commander of the 8th Army. Before leaving, however, he had the satisfaction of knowing that he had saved the position.

General Montgomery almost at a stroke restored the shaken morale of the troops; and when Rommel attacked on the morning of August 31st and broke through the weakly held southern part of the front, the troops were deployed on a line from Alamein to the Ruweisat ridge and along that and Alam Halfa ridge. The German advance was partly checked by minefields; and when the tanks reached Alam Halfa ridge they were driven back with heavy loss by the 22nd Armoured brigade. During the night the bombers attacked enemy concentrations with great effect. The attack on September 1st was checked even more decisively and the bombers intervened once more at night. The following day was occupied mainly by harassing attacks of the 7th armoured division, on the extreme left; and on September 3rd enemy columns were observed moving west. That night the New Zealand division counter-attacked in order to close the gap in the south; but the reaction was prompt and strong, though the enemy was pressed steadily back. On September 7th Montgomery decided to leave him in possession of the western edge of the minefield and resume training and reorganization for his own attack later on. This admirably fought defensive action inflicted a defeat upon Rommel which immensely heartened the troops. They had been fine troops throughout the fighting from Gazala to Alamein. They had lacked appropriate leadership; now they were given it.

But in the meantime, Mr. Churchill, who had received the news of Tobruk during the Second Washington Conference,



10. The Battle of Alamein

The positions at the opening of the battle and the direction of the breakout to the west.

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had returned to face a barrage of criticism. On January 27th he met a critical Commons by demanding a Vote of Confidence which he received by 464 votes to 1. On July 1st he was challenged in a Vote of Censure on the central direction of the war. In these dark days it was the fashion to criticize his methods and produce paper-perfect plans for the conduct of the war. But, as General Smuts said, later on, the able man must be left to work in the way that suits him best. The remedy is to dismiss him. Mr. Churchill made that point; and the debate ended in 476 votes being cast in his favour and only 25 for the motion. From that point the position in Egypt began to change; and at Alam Halfa the tide ebbed decisively, though this could not be recognized at the time.

The battle of Alam Halfa, decisive in its measure, required the confirmation of a defeat which would finally remove the threat from the Nile valley. Montgomery had wisely checked his riposte on the retreating enemy; and he was as wise in postponing his counter-offensive until he could be reasonably certain it would achieve complete success. Though many chafed at the delay, he recognized that the Cyrenaica 'lancers' must now be ended. Rommel, however, had fallen sick and had been flown to Germany; and he was still absent when Montgomery struck on the night of October 23rd. Although the formula of three to one for success against the modern defensive still retained its spurious magic, Montgomery had nothing like that superiority. He may have had about two-thirds more personnel and perhaps twice the number of tanks. But not all his *materiel* was, even now, as good as Rommel's. He had moreover no open flank to operate against—and he decided to break through the northern, the enemy's strongest sector, since success there would enable him to cut the main line of retreat, the coastal road.

Heavy and persistent attacks on the enemy's concentrations and communications had assured him air superiority, and twenty minutes' bombardment of field and medium guns provided the immediate preparation for the advance of the four divisions of the 30th corps. A feint attack by the 13th corps in the south made some headway, while the infantry

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with engineers were cutting two corridors through the mine belts in the north to allow the 1st and 10th Armoured divisions of the 10th corps to pass through to engage the enemy armour. They reached the Meteirya ridge; but, while the 30th corps were consolidating, Rommel returned, concentrated his armour and began a series of heavy counter-attacks. Montgomery withdrew the 10th corps and set the reorganized infantry to enlarge their bridgehead across the mine belts. The 9th Australian division cut off the Germans in the coastal area; but the armour was still unable to break out.

Renewed thrusts in the north, however, on the night of October 30th and in the early morning of November 2nd established a new corridor and, though the 9th Armoured brigade suffered heavily from an anti-tank screen and the 1st Armoured division became involved in a fierce armoured battle, the 51st division broadened the bridgehead south of the German concentration. On November 3rd a heavy volume of traffic was observed moving westward on the coast road; and, on the following morning, the 51st division, with part of the 4th Indian division, forced back the anti-tank screen and the armour was released. The battle of Alamein, one of the decisive battles of the war, was over; and the pursuit began. It was checked by rain, and the R.A.F. inflicted less destruction on the enemy than might have been expected. But 30,000 prisoners, including nine generals, were taken; and the enemy lost about double that number altogether, more than half the casualties being Germans. Almost all his tanks were put out of action and he lost, too, some 400 guns and much transport. The British casualties numbered 13,500; and the army was hot in pursuit.

But it was foiled at Matruh; and, though Montgomery manoeuvred the enemy out of Agheila and, by a sharp frontal attack and a turning movement, forced him out of Buerat on January 15th, the spectacular captures were evaded. After a series of brushes with rearguards, the 8th Army entered Tripoli on January 23rd. From Benghazi onwards, he had been compelled to overcome an even more relentless enemy than the Afrika Korps—the steadily growing difficulties of his

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own supply. At Tripoli, 1,400 miles from his point of departure, he won victory in that battle only by a few days. Mr. Churchill later visited the troops in Tripoli; and by January 29th advance patrols were across the Tunisian frontier.

At this point the operations of the 8th Army were given a completely new orientation by passing under the control of General Eisenhower. How this development came about is a chapter of troubled history in the relations of the Allies. It had been decided at the First Washington Conference that only 'the European theatre was decisive'; but what an impression of the sane and the visionary must have been made on Mr. Churchill and the British Staff by the plan brought to London at the beginning of April 1942 by Mr. Hopkins and General Marshall! 'Overlord' (né 'Roundup'), the invasion of western Europe by thirty American and eighteen British divisions, was proposed for the spring of the next year. At that time the Battle of the Atlantic was in a critical state; and shipping in American coastal waters, for which the United States navy was responsible, was being lost at such a rate that Mr. Churchill was led to ask the President some pointed questions. The American troops had had no experience of fighting the Germans. There were no measures afoot at the time that promised to produce sufficient landing craft. Yet not only was this tremendous adventure proposed, with no apparent appreciation of the disastrous effects of a possible failure, but there was even a plan 'Sledgehammer', a limited operation, suggested for September 1942, in case of the imminent collapse of Russia. Mr. Maisky, Mr. Litvinov and even Lord Beaverbrook, in one of his short holidays from office, clamoured for the opening of a 'Second Front'; and Stalin, at the Moscow Conference in August, went so far as to suggest that it was Mr. Churchill's cowardice that caused his reluctance! Such a suggestion was all the more difficult to answer because of the ease and point of the best rejoinder.

United States military policy hinged on keeping Russia and China in the war; but, in the July discussions in London, it appeared to turn as much on getting the American sea and ground forces into action against the German ground troops

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in 1942. The crisis of the Battle of the Atlantic had deepened. Rommel was poised for his attempt to break through the Alamein position to the Nile valley. A Channel operation as late as September had risks which the United States naval representatives freely admitted. But, when it was clear that Britain had the greatest misgivings about proceeding with 'Sledgehammer', Mr. Roosevelt returned to his first love and pressed for an operation against North Africa not later than October 30th. So was born 'Torch' (né 'Gymnast') and little more than three months were given for the detailed planning. Marshal Stalin when told of the decision, after jibes about Britain's reluctance to fight against Germans, gave characteristic approval: it would take Germany in the rear, provoke French and Germans to fight each other, would put Italy out of action and would confirm Spain's neutrality.

Three days after Stalin had taunted Mr. Churchill about British reluctance to fight Germans the raid on Dieppe took place. There had been similar raids earlier in the year at Bruneval, St. Nazaire and Boulogne, but this was the most ambitious; and, as the Nazi radio during the April talks in London broadcast a message that the Allies were discussing an invasion of western Europe and that Hitler would be only too pleased to meet one, there is perhaps some slight reason for the Germans thinking it had arrived. The greatest difficulty in such a raid is not to secure a lodgment but to reembark when the defenders have been thoroughly alarmed. The bulk of the gallant little force which raided Dieppe were Canadians and the casualties were exceptionally heavy. But many valuable lessons were learned for future landings.

'Torch' had to appear an American operation to save French susceptibilities; and, for the same reason, General de Gaulle's following could play no part in it. To safeguard secrecy, it was decided he could not even be informed. The United States had maintained with Vichy a contact that enabled the canvassing of military opinion in North Africa where Weygand had kept alive the hope of revenge; and General Mark Clark had even been landed there by submarine to test the probable temperature of the reception of

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the invasion. Generals Mast and Béthouart, both of whom should have known better, gave the impression that General Giraud would, if brought to North Africa, confirm the solidarity of the French units in support of the operation.

General Eisenhower¹ was appointed to command the troops who were to land at Casablanca,² Oran and Algiers, the two first named being designed to afford mutual support in case of a possible blow from Spanish Morocco. The naval commander was Admiral Cunningham and the forces for Oran and Algiers sailed from British ports on October 25th while General Patton's force for Casablanca steamed direct from the United States. The three forces landed on November 8th at Algiers, almost unopposed, at Oran after some bitter naval opposition and hard fighting on land; but at Casablanca the fighting was heavy and only ceased on the order of Admiral Darlan. Eisenhower had taken up his command post at Gibraltar on November 5th and there made his first contact with Giraud; but when the latter was taken to North Africa he, and the Allies, discovered that his name meant nothing. Darlan, however, who had returned to North Africa to visit his sick son, represented Pétain, though he was afterwards disowned; and, when he was persuaded to throw in his lot with the Allies, his order to cease fighting represented the authority the French generals required and was at once obeyed.

Time was then vital to the Allies. Their objective was the area of north-eastern Tunisia, including the ports of Bizerta and Tunis, which the enemy dare not surrender without a struggle. Rommel at this time was making full speed back to his base in Tunisia, and the success of the Allied expedition would have cut him off. Eisenhower was, therefore, perfectly right to stop the fighting with the French at the earliest possible moment; but his use of Darlan was widely resented by both the British and American public. Nothing that was known, nothing that was later learned, of Darlan can make

¹ He was a Lieutenant Colonel at the outbreak of the war so little known, even in his own country, that he was labelled 'Lt. Col. D. D. Ersenbeing' in a press photograph.

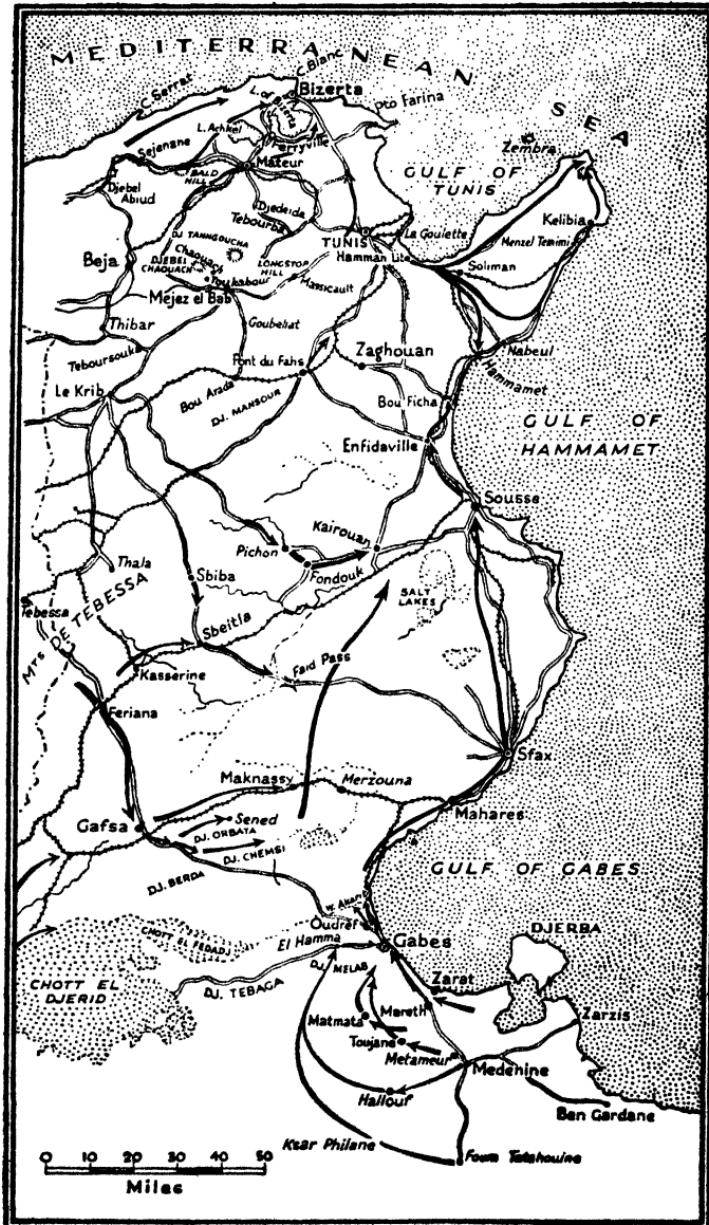
² See Map 3, p. 76. Cf. Map 11, p. 158.

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him any more acceptable to us; but he could release the Allied troops for their mission in Tunisia and no one else could. Later on the outcry about Eisenhower's very limited collaboration with him was extinguished by his assassination.

But, by that time, the Germans had defeated the attempt of Lieut.-General Kenneth Anderson's British 1st Army to capture Tunis and Bizerta. They had reacted with characteristic swiftness. On November 11th they had occupied the territory of Vichy France; on the 27th, indeed, the French had scuttled their fleet at Toulon to prevent its falling into German hands. And from November 10th they were reinforcing the enemy garrison of Tunisia by air. It was the nearness of their base across the Sicilian Narrows that had in the first place decided the Allies that to land east of Algiers was impracticable, though it will ever remain in doubt whether air or sea landings, despite the additional risk, might not have prevented the German reinforcements arriving. Tunis is 560 miles from Algiers by the two poor roads and indifferent railway; and the French troops made use of them to little immediate purpose. General Anderson had only the 78th division at his command when Bougie was occupied on November 11th and Bone the next day by a parachute battalion. Within a week he was meeting German troops on the coast road and at Beja, some sixty miles from Tunis. The troops pressed forwards to Djedeida on November 28th, only twelve miles from Tunis. There fierce counter-attacks assisted by tanks and dive-bombers held them up while the Allied air support was grounded by mud. They were compelled to withdraw to the key position of Medjez el Bab. On December 22nd they captured the commanding 'Longstop hill' (Gebel Ahmera) as a prelude to a further attempt to break through to Tunis; but there was to be no follow up, for the rains then set in, and on Christmas Day, 'Longstop' was lost again. The Allies recognized that the time had passed for a *coup de main* and set themselves to build up.

On January 14th there opened at Casablanca a conference between Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill with their respective staffs. At this conference it was decided that the



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8th Army should come under the orders of General Eisenhower when it passed into the North African theatre of operations and that General Alexander should be deputy C.-in-C. with 'immediate tactical control' of the 1st and 8th Armies, and Air Chief Marshal Tedder should become C.-in-C. Mediterranean and responsible to Eisenhower for all air operations in this theatre. The next operation, 'Husky', the invasion of Sicily, was decided upon in preference to the invasion of western Europe, not only because Britain preferred it but also because the United States naval and air representatives both saw advantages in clearing the Mediterranean and establishing air bases at least as far north as Foggia in Italy.

One other decision was Mr. Roosevelt's—that nothing less than the 'Unconditional Surrender' of Germany, Italy and Japan would be accepted. Mr. Churchill and the British Cabinet accepted the President's formula before it was announced. It is an attractive theory that the proclamation of 'Unconditional Surrender' prolonged the war, and Marshal Stalin was not enamoured of it; but the theory will not survive the confrontation of fact. The Hitler plot, some eighteen months later, was motived by the desire to end the war; and can anyone think that, after the brutal way in which all who were suspected of sympathizing with it were punished, there could have been another attempt?

One other achievement of the conference was the success in persuading Generals de Gaulle and Giraud to shake hands; but it was the briefest leasehold. Giraud was later slowly but surely edged off the stage.

After the conference, the Tunisian position turned increasingly in favour of the Allies, so much so, indeed, that on February 14th the enemy delivered a heavy attack against the right of the 1st Army which now included two infantry divisions, the 6th Armoured division, the French 19th corps and the 2nd U.S. corps. The 8th Army were at this time in contact with Rommel's rearguard south-east of the Mareth line; and, should Rommel be held there or compelled to retreat through Tunisia, the Americans from Sbeitla or Gafsa might cut him off. So heavy and skilful was the enemy attack

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that it broke through the Kasserine Pass, struck up towards the communications of the 1st Army at Thala and towards Tebessa, a little west of which was the principal remaining airfield in the southern sector. For some days his advance became increasingly threatening; and then the resistance hardened and on the 23rd the enemy was in retreat. But it cost the Americans some heavy casualties.

Scarcely a week later, on March 6th, Rommel fell upon Montgomery's position at Medenine; but this attack was beaten off, almost entirely by anti-tank fire, and Rommel left fifty-two tanks on the field. A fortnight later Montgomery took the offensive against the Mareth line. This long prepared defensive position lay between the sea and the Matmata hills with the deep and wide Wadi Zigzaou barring the approach. On the evening of March 20th a bridgehead was quickly secured across it; but, as it could not be maintained Montgomery, while holding the enemy at Mareth, put all the rest of his force into a flank attack west and north of the Matmata Hills. In this attack he had, for the first time, close air support; and on the 27th Rommel was compelled to fall back through Gabes. The enemy was driven off the Wadi Akarit on April 6th and the following day the 8th Army joined hands with the Americans near Gafsa. Taking the coastal ports in its stride the army reached Enfidaville a week later. Rommel had been recalled to Germany; and the enemy went to ground on this strong defensive position. After a costly attack on April 20th, Alexander regrouped his forces and determined to force the passage of the Majerda valley to Tunis while the 2nd American corps, transferred to the left, struck at Bizerta. As a preliminary, 'Longstop hill' was attacked and captured on April 26th; on May 3rd the Americans took Mateur and on the 6th General Horrocks's infantry broke through the defences of the Majerda valley. The 6th and 7th Armoured divisions were sent forward; and, early in the afternoon of the following day, Tunis was entered; General Bradley's American 2nd corps entered Bizerta at about the same time. The 6th Armoured division was at once sent to force the gateway of Cape Bon Peninsula where the enemy

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had determined to make his last stand. The armoured division took the enemy in the rear and in a few days all was over. Units were surrendering throughout these days and on May 13th Marshal Messe, the Italian Commander-in-Chief, ordered all the remaining troops to lay down their arms. Over a quarter of a million prisoners were taken, half of them German, including the remains of the Afrika Korps and many other first-rate units. Thus brilliantly ended a very brilliant campaign.

In the Far East as in Russia and North Africa there had been a similar sequence of events. There was a minor campaign on the western 'haunch' of the Japanese break-through, in mid-December, 1942. But the British and Indian troops who forced their way towards Akyab, in the first Arakan campaign, could make no headway against the deep defensive of Donbaik, at the tip of the Mayu peninsula. After four heavy attacks they began to feel the pressure of a skilful counter-attack at the beginning of April. They were outmanœuvred by an enemy who needed no supply train and was an expert in fighting in jungle country; and, by the middle of May, they had been pressed back to their starting point. They suffered 2,500 casualties; and malaria took a heavier toll. Their sole achievement had been to hold the Japanese off the Indian frontier until the monsoon broke. Brigadier Orde Wingate's 'Chindits', whose communications were by air and control by radio, spent three months in northern Burma cutting the few but vital railways, destroying bridges and sowing disorganization up to the Shan States, before returning with valuable knowledge which was successfully put to usury later on.

But, on the eastern 'haunch', the ultimate success strikingly outweighed the initial failure. A small force of Japanese landed at Gona and Buna on July 21st and after receiving reinforcements began to advance up the Buna-Kokoda track. Its object was Port Moresby on the southern side of the Owen Stanley range; and while it was under way the Japanese on August 25th attempted a diversionary land-

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ing at Milne Bay. This had been anticipated and was decisively checked. But the Buna column pressed on to Kokoda, the key to the Owen Stanley range, in spite of the resistance of Australian Militia and air raids on its poor communications. It was able to filter through the gap in the mountains and by September 17th it had reached the Ioribaiwa ridge, and was on the edge of the lower ground to Port Moresby, only thirty-two miles away. There the retreat was halted; and, five days later, the Australian advance began. Despite the difficulties of the country Kokoda was recaptured on November 2nd. A few days later a United States force was flown in to a point 100 miles east of Buna and began a swift advance to the west. On November 18th and December 1st attempts to land Japanese reinforcements west of Buna were defeated by air attack; and on December 8th the Australians captured Gona. The rest of the Japanese force was destroyed in several weeks bitter fighting and General MacArthur had inflicted the first defeat on a serious Japanese movement.

Meanwhile an even more heartening operation was drawing to a successful close in the Solomons. There the United States Marines had taken the initiative against Guadalcanal where the Japanese had established an airfield to threaten the important American base in New Caledonia and to hold off any attempt to attack their own base Rabaul, in New Britain, from the east. On August 7th a body of Marines, covered by a strong naval force including carriers, was landed on the islands of Florida and Guadalcanal; and with unexpected ease occupied the airfield which they named 'Henderson Field'. But the reaction came swiftly; and a series of six heavy naval battles took place in the waters between the island and the adjacent islands, the 'Slot' as it came to be known. The fifth of these engagements on November 13th–14th was described by Admiral King as 'one of the most furious sea battles ever fought'. It was during this battle that Rear-Admiral Callaghan was killed. But it was in the third of the battles, in the second week of October, that Japanese reinforcements were landed and the Marines were called upon to face their sternest test. There was a moment when the Americans had

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only one carrier—the damaged *Enterprise*—in the western Pacific, and only ‘Henderson Field’ provided the essential air cover.

The United States army began to reinforce the island garrison on October 13th, though as late as November 2nd more Japanese reinforcements were landed. The naval battle—Tassafaronga—on November 30th, one of the most damaging of all, was the last. It may have been the developments in New Guinea, where the threat to Australia was being liquidated, that caused the diversion; it was certainly in ignorance of the American naval casualties. But apparently the Japanese then decided to abandon Guadalcanal. On December 9th the island passed to the command of the army and Major-General Alexander A. Patch. In the New Year the ground forces, with ample air cover, took the offensive and, with the assistance of a series of naval attacks the remnant of the Japanese force was evacuated. By February 2nd all organized resistance had ceased. Air attacks on the island and on naval vessels continued for some time. But Guadalcanal and the adjacent islands were lost; and the six months' struggle to recapture them demonstrates the price Japan set upon them. A brilliant demonstration of versatile skill and tenacity, this was the first occasion in the war that the Allies had taken the initiative against the Japanese and carried it through to success.

Chapter Five

THE APPROACH MARCH

May 1943-May 1944

The period which lay between the defeat of the German-Italian force in Tunisia and the end of the Russian spring campaign in May 1944, roughly Russia's third year of the war, has a significant unity. It covers the approach to the decisive assault in the eastern as well as in the western theatre. In May 1944 General Alexander launched the 'First Blow' which was to carry him into Rome and ring up the curtain on the invasion of the west; and that month, too, General MacArthur was able to announce that for 'strategic purposes' his landing in Biak Island marked the end of the New Guinea campaign. He, too, was about to strike a 'first blow' toward his final objective.

But the character of the struggle in the two theatres differed greatly. The Germans had fallen back on a Frederician strategy; and their defensive was as remarkable as their blitzkrieg. Until almost the end of the war it was interrupted by sharp, surprising and arresting counter-attacks. The General Staff had been as thorough in their study of the defensive as of the blitzkrieg; and, from the spring of 1943 to their final defeat, this developed theory and discipline alone saved them from disaster.

The Japanese appear to have reacted less deliberately than instinctively, with more fatalism and opportunism. The Allied strategy, working upon conditions that were more difficult to cope with, developed inexorably to its designed end; and the almost incredible tenacity with which the Japanese clung to

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their early conquests never showed any promise of counter-acting it.

In the air and on the sea the Germans fell back upon a strategy similar to that which inspired them on land. But in neither medium were they so well prepared. By this time the 'Battle of the Ruhr' was well under way. The tonnage of the attacks was steadily increasing. In seven major attacks in June, 10,000 tons of bombs were dropped, and the Allied raids as steadily increased their range and destructiveness. But, though the Germans retaliated, their raids on Britain never again fell so heavily as in 1940. They could not defend as effectively in the air as on the ground; and neither could they hit back so damagingly. Moreover the pressure on the defence influenced their strategy far beyond the borders of Germany and limited their movement and economy in the battles in Russia. On the sea the change was more marked. The crisis in the battle of the Atlantic had passed. In November 1943 the Allied shipping losses were the lowest since May 1940. It was the Allied offensive on the sea and in the air, as well as the sea-air-ground integration that was still in its developmental stage.

The turn of the tide was reflected, though it was not marked at the time, by the multiplication of the Allied conferences. *Inter arma silent leges* runs the adage. But it is not only law that falls into abeyance in the fury of war. Silent, too, are all the uneasy frictions that mark the working of even the most harmonious alliances; but when the crisis is recognizably past the old differences and divisions revive. During this phase, accordingly, many conferences took place. In less than four months, in the latter part of 1943, there were five conferences—the 1st Quebec Conference, the 2nd Moscow Conference, the two conferences at Cairo and the Conference of Teheran. It can now be recognized, when the fact has significance only for posterity, that the western Allies then began to lose the peace. Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill had always to travel thousands of miles to meet Marshal Stalin. Great men, they were, however united in the broad strategy

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of the war, divided by tradition and experience; and, meeting the ruler of Russia, armed with a simple comprehensive policy, they yielded points in the faith that compacts would be honourably kept in spirit and in truth. If they had been more completely united they might have safeguarded themselves better; but neither of them was as physically fitted to maintain essential conditions as was Stalin to profit by differences of emphasis. Not only there, and then, but before and later, Mr. Churchill, who saw the issues clearly, was unable to secure the shaping of the policy that was vital if the western Allies were to harvest a real victory and a true peace.

Such confidence, however, was in the air that the Allies began to look not only to the prevention of future wars, but also to the problem of controlling the major social and political factors that might affect the peace. The impulse came from the West; the East spoke a different language. It was under idealist inspiration that such conferences as the United Nations Food Conference took place at Hot Springs, Virginia, at the beginning of this phase and, towards the end, the foundation was laid of U.N.R.R.A. that did so much unobtrusive work to assist the helpless victims of the war.

Another evidence of the change in the climate of the war was the readjustment in the attitude of countries involved in the war or on its periphery. Turkey, in spite of the negotiations before and after the 2nd Cairo Conference, preferred to pitch her terms for entering the war so high that the Allies could not meet them. Franco, to a much more imperious invitation, had done the same on behalf of Spain; and who can blame either country for reluctance to cross the Rubicon? Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek, recently elected President of the Chinese Republic, was present at the 1st Cairo Conference, when it was decided to compel Japan to disgorge all her gains; but that was not his real problem, though he may well have so regarded it at the time. The deterioration in the relations between Poland and Soviet Russia increased more rapidly with the unfortunate death of General Sikorski in an air accident. In Greece the troubles were internal; and it was only in March that E.L.A.S. and E.D.E.S. were prevailed

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upon even to state their agreement to abandon campaigning against each other in favour of the less congenial task of co-operating against the common enemy, Germany. Liaison officers were dropped in May 1943 for the Partisans in Yugoslavia who were caught in a similar dilemma; and Tito, who was receiving British support, began to displace not only Mihailovitch but also the existing Government. Hungary fell completely under Germany after Admiral Horthy had received the customary 'At Home' card from Hitler's headquarters.

Most of these developments might have been foreseen; but the steps by which General de Gaulle became head of a French Provisional Government were neither so predictable nor so easy. He and General Giraud had agreed on the Constitution of the French Committee of National Liberation in June, and the following month the Council of the Resistance Movement in France adhered to it. At the end of August it was recognized by the governments of the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada; and the next month it was able to arrange a Lend-Lease agreement with the United States. It early founded a *Committee of Épuration* and ran into trouble with Lebanon, strange manifestations of the fatal tendency of liberation movements to oppress others. Somehow the intervention of General Catroux smoothed away the difficulties in the Near East. De Gaulle got rid of Giraud and thereby became president of the Committee, Mr. Duff Cooper becoming the British representative, with the rank of ambassador. This position was the natural fruit of de Gaulle's defiant stand in 1940; but it now bore other and stranger fruit. Many of those who had made at least an armistice inevitable now, through Hitler's following his star to the east, figured among the patriots. General de Gaulle himself, in April, appointed two Communists to the Committee; he could hardly afford to look askance at the composition of the French Army of the Interior, which by this time numbered 175,000. Instead he found himself as its formal commander compelled to beg arms for it.

The Allies were now developing their activity in the air in

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many directions. In the 'battle of the Ruhr' the objective was to reduce production 'at least as much by the indirect effect of damage to the services, housing and amenities, as by any direct damage to the factories or railways themselves'.¹ It was essentially the same ruthless attitude which the Germans had taken up towards Warsaw and Rotterdam, though in both these cases the victims were incapable of any effective reply. It was a striking advance in hitting power when the R.A.F. dropped 10,000 tons of bombs in seven attacks during the battle of the Ruhr; but when the battle of Berlin ended in the following March the tonnage of bombs dropped had immensely increased. In May 1944 Bomber Command dropped 37,000 tons on Germany and Occupied Europe, and the United States Strategic Air Forces, based on the United Kingdom and Italy, 63,000 tons. The tonnage of the bombs had also mounted from 4,000 lb. to 8,000 and 12,000 lb. The tonnage-sortie ratio steadily increased as well as the development in accuracy; though this was a slower growth and one that could easily be negated by conditions. Nevertheless with the various devices of 'radar', the use of Pathfinders and Master Bombers, targets were more regularly found. The night bombers of the R.A.F. could at times, indeed, surpass in accuracy the Flying Fortresses whose boast was precision. Round-the-clock bombing was adopted by the R.A.F. in February 1943 and entailed sharing in the day attacks. It was R.A.F. Mosquitoes that pin-pointed the walls of Amiens prison so that the prisoners might escape; Mosquitoes, too, that destroyed a single house at The Hague.

The Lancasters, the best of the bombers, figured in many brilliant sorties such as the breaching of the Möhne and Eder dams. The main objective of this daring raid was the denial of water for industrial purposes. It was little more than a month later that the 'shuttle service' was inaugurated by the raid on Friedrichshafen when the bombers flew on to North Africa and took Spezzia on their return journey three days later. Peenemünde, where the research station for 'flying

¹ *Bomber Offensive*, Marshal of the Royal Air Force Sir Arthur Harris, p. 147.

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bombs' and rockets was located, was one of the most important targets in the summer. On the night of August 17th it was attacked in broad moonlight; and towards the end of the year French coastal installations and communications took priority. Aircraft factories and German aircraft on the ground or in the air had been for some time receiving special attention in the deliberate attempt to destroy the *Luftwaffe*.

Casualties suffered by the R.A.F. and the U.S.A.A.F. for some brief periods threatened to become prohibitive. They were always far too heavy in precious personnel; and many expedients were devised to reduce them. The tonnage-minute ratio was increased; in the raid on Brunswick, on January 14th–15th (1944), for instance, 2,000 tons were dropped in 23 minutes. The enemy 'radar' control was put out of action by dropping metal strips—'Window'; and on its first use it created immense confusion. Diversionary flights became a feature of the raids. In this way the defence could be misled as to the main objective. And there were special squadrons devoted entirely to the jamming of radio instructions given to the German fighters. Nevertheless, the ingenious devices did not prevent the destruction of 96 out of 800 bombers in the attack on Nuremberg on March 30th; and the daylight raids of the U.S.A.A.F. were at times productive of appalling casualties.

No words can fitly describe the heroism of the young British and American airmen who continued to face this perilous venture—each sortie a separate battle in which individuals staked their lives in the challenge to the defence—though fortunately at an average cost of about half the Nuremberg figure; and their reward was the knowledge that they were maintaining the initiative in the air and progressively defeating the *Luftwaffe*. The German Air Force became incapable of offensive action on any significant scale. Even in her construction programme Germany was thrown back to the defensive; and by March 1944 half the German Air Force was in the west defending German cities, a third in the east and only a sixth in the Mediterranean; and in addition over a million Germans were engaged in anti-aircraft defence. The

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effect on the German people may be gathered from Jodl's remarks in November about the 'devil of subversion' and his suggestion that Germany 'was strained to the utmost'. Such hints in a country subject to iron repression do much to justify the hopes of those who had taken the more ruthless view of strategic and even 'area' bombing.

Attack from the air proved the most damaging weapon against the submarine; and it was the development of air power that supplemented the normal surface and under-water craft of the Navy in the maintenance of the sea power which continued to assure not only British survival but also the Allied offensive capacity. The 'battle of the Atlantic', in which the Germans attempted to reduce Allied sea power to impotence, passed its peak in the spring of 1943, mainly owing to the increasing use of long-range and carrier-borne aircraft and the activities of Coastal Command. Apart from the development of support groups, these it was that turned the tide of the battle against the Germans; and they received an important adjunct to their power when at the beginning of November, following an agreement with Portugal the preceding month, an air base was set up in the Azores.

In the third week of May the small island of Pantellaria began to receive serious attention. It lies some forty-four miles from the African coast and sixty from Sicily; and the decision was to reduce it, if possible, by air. The Air Force first dropped 200,000 lb. of bombs on it; and then the Navy bombarded it. On June 11th it surrendered with a heavy salvo of excuses. Lampedusa, a much smaller island, ninety miles to the southwest, followed suit the next day. The Sicilian Channel was now clear and the air offensive had spread to Sardinia, Sicily and the Italian mainland: as long as possible it was desirable to keep the enemy in suspense about the next objective.

General Eisenhower had made it clear at Casablanca that he would prefer Sardinia and Corsica as initial objectives, if the design were to invade and completely defeat Italy, but if the primary purpose was to clear the Mediterranean for Allied shipping Sicily was the proper objective. The Sicilian

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campaign was decided upon, the Americans accepting it as avoiding any commitment 'to indefinite strategic objectives in the area'.¹ Generals Marshall and Eisenhower were determined that whatever was done in the Mediterranean should be clearly subsidiary to, and support, the attack across the Channel. From the beginning they had conceived their intervention in the west as a cross-Channel invasion in force; and to the end General Eisenhower, powerfully backed by General Marshall, regarded this as the best, if not the only method of 'speeding victory'. Anything outside this narrow prescription he regarded as 'politics', particularly if it was suggested from the British side. In fact, in the last stage of the war, he was left to apply it with so little imagination, that the western Allies secured the shadow rather than the substance of victory. Even in the present phase this rigidity may have begun to wrench the plans of the western Allies away from the path that would have prevented that disaster.

It is obvious that the invasion of Sicily should have followed the collapse in Tunisia more swiftly; and as the planning began in February the delay needs explanation. The difficulty of assembling sufficient landing craft was the most potent reason; but the cross-Channel invasion was decided upon by the United States as early as March 1942 and the Prime Minister was not satisfied, even then, about the rate of production of landing barges. Neither was Mr. Stimson; and he wrote a caustic note on the absurdity of allowing a strategic conception to be negatived by so trivial a shortage. How then can one account for a shortage a year later? The diversion of labour in the service of strategic bombing cannot be made the scapegoat. More probably the United States Navy Department which, in Mr. Stimson's words, accepted 'primary responsibility for the necessary labours in the Pacific'² secured priority for that theatre. Although the President and his mili-

¹ *Crusade in Europe* by General Eisenhower, p. 177.

² On 23rd July 1942 Mr. Hopkins cabled to the President from London: 'It is my belief that we can give King (Naval Chief of Staff) some additional air and landing craft in the Pacific.' *The White House Papers*, p. 611.

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tary advisers accepted the principle that 'only the European theatre was decisive', Congress and unofficial America persisted in regarding that as Britain's cockpit and the Far East as America's war. The Navy Department, by securing landing craft for the Pacific that deprived sea power of its ability to exert its full influence upon the strategy of the European theatre, forestalled the domestic friction that might have been caused by any impression that the Far Eastern campaign was being neglected for the sake of Europe. It thereby eased present at the expense of post-war political tensions. Certain it is that the shortage of landing craft interfered to the end in Europe. It dominated Mediterranean strategy. It was the reverse of magnificent; it certainly was not war.

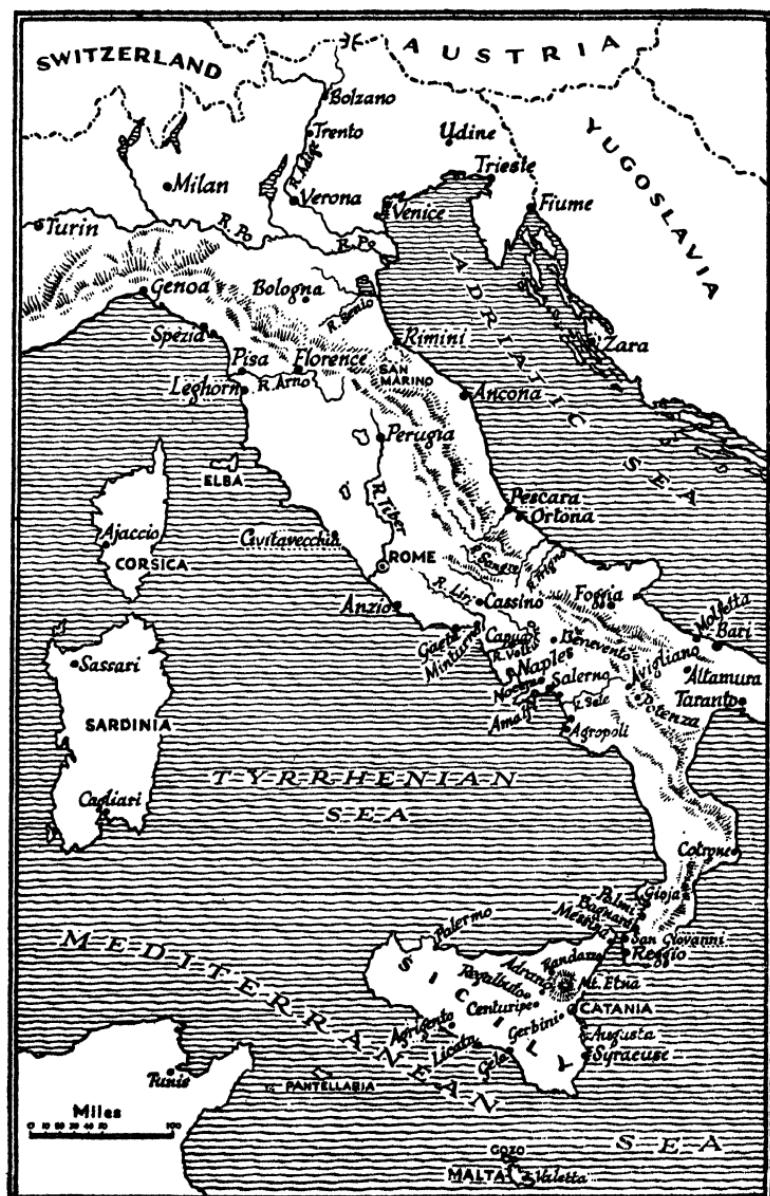
For the campaign—Operation 'Husky'—General Eisenhower was given General Alexander as ground commander of 15th Army Group, and Admiral Sir Andrew Cunningham and Air Marshal Tedder completed the list of service commanders—the three British commanders whom Eisenhower most respected and liked. The invasion was committed to General Montgomery commanding the 8th Army on the right and General Patton with the 7th Army on the left. As first conceived the plan provided for Patton to land in the north-west; but on Montgomery's suggestion the two armies landed on the south-eastern side of the island within distance of mutual support. The hierarchical arrangement of the command was the simplest element in the invasion; for one American division (the 45th) was brought straight from the United States, the 1st Canadian division came from England, the other divisions arrived from various parts of North Africa, while the airborne troops took off from Kairouan, in Tunisia. Over 2,700 ships of all kinds were employed in the invasion, 280 of them warships, 320 merchant ships and the rest larger or smaller landing craft, among which was the most valuable 'duck', an amphibious invention that met a real need.

The campaign opened on July 9th when two airborne divisions, the 82nd for the 7th Army front and the 1st for the 8th took off from Kairouan. The winds off Sicily were strong that night and they grew in force as the gliders approached Sicily.

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Several of them, with little training, were as a consequence blown into the sea. But when the ground assault took place the following morning progress was on the whole swift. Only the 1st (U.S.) division attacking (with the 45th, the 3rd and the 1st armoured divisions) on the left, about Gela, met serious opposition. A moment of crisis was created by a German counter-attack; but the situation was saved by naval bombardment and, for the rest, objectives were swiftly secured. The Allies, with the 8th Army (5th, 50th, 51st and 1st Canadian divisions) on the right had to face six weak Italian coastal divisions, five field divisions and two German armoured divisions; but before the end the Germans had four divisions in the field. Until the plain of Catania was reached progress was satisfactory. Syracuse and Augusta were occupied within four days and, as the 7th Army struck north-east towards the northern coastal road and Palermo, the 8th approached the critical area about Catania.

The mountainous country of the north, with the great massif of Etna as its core overlooking the coast road, resembled the Enfidaville position in Tunisia; and the Germans extracted every advantage from it to block the 8th Army's advance. Upon it the greater part of the enemy's strength was centred. Very early Montgomery recognized that Adrano, on the western face of the massif, was the key to the position; but, although he transferred the weight of the assault to that area, and brought from Sousse the 78th division to attack it, little headway was made until the 7th Army, after the capture of Palermo, began to advance along the northern coastal road. The 8th Army fought its heaviest battle at Primasole bridge, below Catania, a fortnight before that position was surrendered, on August 5th. But by that time Adrano was on its last legs. It was occupied the following night; but even then, with the Americans and British converging on Randazzo, the road junction to the north, the stubborn resistance was maintained. Randazzo fell on August 13th and the Germans hastened their withdrawal. Three days later the Americans entered Messina and the campaign was over.



12. The Campaigns in Sicily and Italy

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So remarkable were the skill and the stubbornness of the German defensive that they were able to withdraw over 40,000 of their force with much of their equipment. The evacuation was made mostly at night, across the narrow Messina strait; and for once the Allied air forces failed to show up effectively against the enemy's anti-aircraft barrage and coastal guns. Nevertheless, the total known casualties of the enemy were over 165,000; 130,000 of them prisoners. The bulk of the dead, but only 7,000 of the prisoners, were German.

But although the encirclement of the enemy had eluded the Allies the bottom had already fallen out of the Italian resistance; and for some time the facts conformed to the best standards of melodramatic fiction. On July 16th President Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill issued a joint summons to the people of Italy to surrender. The marshalling yards of Rome were bombed by 700 aircraft on July 19th; and the conjunction of events was too much for the people's nerves. It sounded the knell of Mussolini's reign; for six days later he resigned and was arrested. Only the embellishments of technicolour were lacking from his rescue by German paratroops seven weeks later; and meanwhile Marshal Badoglio, become Prime Minister, was doing his best to get out of the war unknown to the Germans, under a screen of false names and secret journeys to Madrid, Lisbon and Sicily. The Allies wished to extract the full advantage of the collapse; and it was even planned to land an airborne force for the capture of Rome; but, though Brigadier-General Maxwell D. Taylor actually reached Rome secretly, the project was stillborn. The Government feared that the Germans were too much on the alert; and, in fact, they occupied Rome on September 10th.

The one certain advantage which the Allies derived from the Italian surrender was the handing over of the fleet, although the battleship *Roma* was bombed and sunk by the Germans on the way to Malta. It seems to have been impossible to avoid a campaign in Italy, much as the Allies had wished it. The Italian people clamoured for peace, they had

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no wish merely to change enemies; and this could not be concealed from the Germans whose reaction was never tardy. The Italian general only arrived in Madrid on August 15th, and met the Allied representatives four days later in Lisbon. Rommel had set up his headquarters in Verona by mid-August, and the Germans were reinforcing their garrison. The question of 'unconditional surrender' seems never to have been an issue. The problem was to instal a new lodger in Rome and the north while the Germans, or fanatical friends, were already residing there. In the event Italy's best gift to the Allies, apart from the Navy, was their desertion of the Axis. In the Balkans and the islands, where the bulk of the troops left after destructive defeats in the African, Russian and Albanian campaigns were to be found, the units melted away. Senior commands, and the major part of the 200,000 troops, surrendered to comparatively minor German forces acting with decision. Many bestowed their arms and equipment on the Partisans and, in Istria, fought with them. But in the Dodecanese, where the Allied hopes had contemplated easy occupation of good air and sea bases, the surrender was made to a handful of Germans; and from this poorly conceived campaign the Allies emerged with damaged reputation.

When the Germans occupied Rome the Italian armistice, signed on September 3rd, had been announced, and the Allies were in the throes of the one critical episode in the first phase of the invasion. Through the usual shortage of landing craft Montgomery was able to land only the 5th and 1st Canadian divisions in the toe of Italy, early on September 3rd. His mission—'Operation Baytown'—was to engage as many of the enemy formations as possible so that 'Operation Avalanche'—the landing of the 5th Army at Salerno—could cut them off in the south. The 8th Army landing was unopposed; but the demolitions in mountainous and easily defensive country made his advance slower than it might have been; and while he was pressing up the 'ankle' of the peninsula, part of the 1st airborne division was landed at Taranto on the 9th. That morning General Mark Clark's 5th Army

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landed at Salerno with the British 10th corps under General McCreery and the United States 6th corps.

The preceding evening, as arranged with Marshal Badoglio, General Eisenhower had announced the 'unconditional surrender' of the Italian forces, and the following day the Italian fleet steamed into harbour at Malta. The island, indeed, had by this time come into the reward of its matchless defence. The 'unsinkable aircraft carrier'—the Italians called it 'the devil's island'—had played a vital part in the Mediterranean campaigns, and its people had the satisfaction of seeing it used as the initial headquarters of the British return to Europe. Before this, indeed, it had been visited by the King; and in December Mr. Roosevelt broke his journey to call there.

But, during the critical days at Salerno, Malta could only look on with the rest of the world as Kesselring tried to throw the invaders into the sea. The German Field-Marshal had correctly read the conditions that marked Salerno as the site of the Allied landing; and picked troops had, by the 13th, penetrated to within a mile of the beaches. Shortage of shipping had prevented the Allies landing their armour, and the advantages remained in the hands of the defenders. But on the following day Tedder struck with his full force against the enemy and his communications; and with that the crisis passed. If the 8th Army could have landed even a week earlier—and Eisenhower's hopes were pitched higher—the crisis would never have arisen. On the 16th, the 5th division (8th Army) met American patrols near Vallo; and the two armies began to move together up the peninsula in which the valleys and rivers, from the backbone of the Apennines, ran across their line of advance. On the 27th Foggia, with its important airfields, was captured by the 78th division and four days later Naples was occupied. Sardinia had been evacuated ten days before; and three days later the French cleared Corsica. The slow and painful advance up the peninsula continued. The Volturno was forced by the 5th Army who advanced from it only to find the Garigliano a stiffer obstacle beyond. It fell to the 8th Army to attempt to end this terrible

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sequence of slow, costly and indecisive clashes; but though the fierce and bloody battle of the Sangro was fought and won on November 28th, it proved impossible to reach the Pescara-Popoli-Rome highway and turn the defences of Rome. General Winter had taken charge.

While these engagements seemed never to be more than factors in an interminable sequence, to be battles fought as it were under a microscope, tremendous events were taking place on the Russian front. It was about this time that Goebbels was writing in his *Diary*, 'If we had fifteen or twenty first-class divisions to throw into the East intact, we would undoubtedly be in a position to repulse the Russians.' There was more than that number of first-rate German divisions pinned down in Italy; and that is the sole military justification of the campaign fought under the only conditions on which the Allies could agree.

Germany entered the spring of this year with no hope beyond a defensive combined with powerful counter-attacks. With an early thaw playing Blücher, this Frederician strategy had saved Kharkov; but it was recognized that, failing a successful spoiling attack, the summer would find the Russians rolling west once more. The place where they might forestall and cripple such an offensive was clearly indicated. About Kursk the Russians occupied a great salient, and reconnaissance had disclosed a troop concentration within it. Such dispositions suggested the possibility of a 'pincers movement', even a 'Cannae' if the pincers could be made to meet east of Kursk,¹ in the area of Shigri-Tim; and accordingly, at dawn on July 5th, the Germans struck heavily at the neck of the salient. The northern blow was delivered from the great base of Orel by seven panzer and eleven infantry divisions and the southern from Bielgorod by ten panzer and eight infantry divisions. The Russians, anticipating attack and recognizing that the neck of the salient was its danger zone, had elaborated a deep defensive north and south; but such forces, so thoroughly trained and so skilfully led, could

¹ See Map 6, p. 104.

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not fail to secure initial penetrations. Within three days a wedge six or seven miles deep was driven into the northern defences; but in the south the penetration was at least twice as deep. In both cases, however, the Russians gripped the edges of the breach firmly; and grim battles of heavy armour took place. The Russian Air Force was at this time stronger than ever before; and it not only raided the enemy's airfield and communications, but also co-operated with the armour.

In the north the initial penetration was quickly under control. A number of settlements and the town Maloarchangelsk were lost; but General Rokossovsky fought back vigorously, and the command were sufficiently confident to launch their prepared attack on the Orel salient exactly a week after the opening of the German offensive. General Vatutin was still giving ground in the south and only in that quarter was there some colour for the German claim that they were penetrating towards 'the rear of the Russian system'. They advanced, in heavy tank battles, over thirty miles towards Tim; but so costly was the struggle that a fortnight from the opening of the attack the Germans saw that their bolt was shot. The wastage had become disproportionate to the gain.

They were the readier to come to this conclusion because of their appreciation of the peril of Orel. General Popov, striking from the north towards the communications of Orel with the west, had in three days torn a gap in the defences, penetrated some thirty miles and, momentarily, even cut the railway to Briansk. The defence of the salient centred in a number of powerfully fortified bastions, among them Bolkov, Mtsensk, Zmievka and Kromy. The first, in the north, was stormed on July 21st; but the second on the eastern face of the salient had been taken the preceding day and Zmievka in the south fell to Rokossovsky who, having broken the attack north of Kursk, had intervened with characteristic violence from the south. The two armies were now reproducing against the Orel salient what the Germans had planned to achieve against Kursk. In a fortnight from the opening of the offensive the Russians were only twelve miles from Orel. In the last phase of the offensive Cossack horsemen had to replace

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the armour in the heavy rains; and, as Rokossovsky pressed forward from the south, Popov cut the railway in the rear of Orel. But the garrison had withdrawn when, at midnight on August 4th, the Russians entered the great 'hedgehog' that had so long defied them.

Meanwhile the attack in the south of the Kursk salient had petered out. By July 22nd the German retirement was in full train, and two days later Marshal Stalin announced the final liquidation of the German offensive, their first summer offensive that had ended in summary defeat. By this time the Germans had lost some 70,000 officers and men and 3,000 tanks. But these were costly battles for both sides and the Russians had lost even more heavily, though not relatively to their capacity for replacement. They had received aircraft, transport and armour from the Allies. Churchills and Shermans, indeed, played no small part in the assault on the Orel salient.

But the capture of Orel, which was soon assimilated into the Russian communication system, was merely the beginning of the Russian summer offensive. On the following day Vatutin, with bold opportunism, seized Bielgorod; and in a few days his columns were streaming south-west towards the Kharkov-Poltava railway. Generals Koniev, Malinovsky and Tolbukhin were already in motion on his left. Briansk, even after the capture of Orel, still held off Popov's troops. Rokossovsky's army awaited its cue as, behind the rivers Seim and Svapa, it was reorganized for decisive intervention later on. But far away in the south Malinovsky had crossed the upper Mius, the bulkhead against an inundation north of Tagenrog, and Koniev had established three bridgeheads over the Donetz below Kharkov.

It was this great hub of communications that now assumed the centre of the stage. While Koniev moved in from the east, Vatutin was cutting the city off from the west and north. Two days after the fall of Bielgorod, one of his columns was in Graivoron, forty-five miles to the west; four days later it had taken Akhtyrka, thirty-five, Krasnokutsk thirty, and Kotelva nearly fifty miles to the south-west of Graivoron. But Krasnokutsk is only twelve miles from the Poltava railway, the

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escape route of Kharkov to the west, and Kotelva is only about thirty-five miles north of Poltava itself. This same day, August 11th, the railway was cut in three places, and Koniev captured Chuguev, little more than twenty miles from the eastern outskirts of Kharkov.

At this point the Germans struck back heavily at the Russian columns. They overran Akhtyrka and Kotelva, and only on the 15th were checked below Graivoron. But Koniev was now closing his grip on the eastern and northern approaches to Kharkov; two days later, indeed, he captured Bolshaya Danilovka, only one mile away. And the Germans had no resources with which to reinforce this area; for not only was Popov now making headway against Briansk but General Sokolovsky had launched an attack on his right from the neighbourhood of Spas Demensk, about eighty miles east of Smolensk, the sometime main base of the Germans in Russia. His advance threatened to open the way to the rear of Briansk; and, five days after he had launched his attack, Popov was able to capture Karachev, its main remaining bastion, twenty-five miles to the east. The gauges of success were so valuable that both operations made only slow progress; but they effectively pinned down the troops far away from the more critical movements to the south.

For Koniev was pressing in towards Merefa and the southern escape route from Kharkov, while Vatutin had resumed his advance on Poltava; and, at length the Germans, having avoided encirclement as long as they thought possible, abandoned Kharkov. On August 23rd it was entered by the Russians from the east, north and west; and with its capture the line from Moscow through Orel and Kursk was now cleared up to the Ukraine. But this success was soon dwarfed by the symptoms of collapse over the greater part of the front. Two days later Rokossovsky crossed the Svapa and Seim and swept westwards towards the Desna. Tolbukhin had already broken out from his bridgehead across the Mius and was beginning to threaten the defensive line north and south of Stalino which protected the industrial Donetz; and Sokolovsky had resumed his advance from Spas Demensk.

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The Germans had anticipated Rokossovsky's attack; but when it stormed the defensive position about Sevsk and turned that of Rilsk, they had expected him to advance against the Desna line which protected Briansk from the south. Instead of conforming to their anticipations he turned south-west and attacked the junctions on the Kursk-Kiev line which formed the links between the northern and southern German armies. Konotop was captured on September 6th and Bakhmach three days later; and only after he had cut these vital communications did one of his columns turn right, force the line of the Desna and occupy Trubchevsk. For some time Briansk had only required this last straw and, on this same day, it, too, was abandoned.

But by this time it was evident that the Germans had come to recognize the obvious and were carrying out a large-scale retreat. One position after another, which had seemed invested with impregnability, was captured, not all indeed with ease or before they could no longer be retained. From the Sea of Azov as far north as the upper Dnieper, the advance was pressed and the resistance maintained only as long as necessary to complete an orderly retirement. The defences of Smolensk were only abandoned under extreme duress. Elnya and Dorogobuzh fell the same day; but Yartsevo not until nearly three weeks later and Demidov two days later still. Tagenrog was stormed the same day as Elnya. On September 19th the communiqué announced that 1,200 places had been occupied; but the positions that had enabled them to withstand heavy attack had first been made untenable. Stalino, the centre of one of the strongest defensive sectors, had fallen eleven days earlier. And then, towards the end of the month, the Russians were occupying places which, at the beginning, had seemed only tantalizing visions on the distant horizon. On September 21st Rokossovsky was at Chernigov on the lower Desna; two days later Poltava was entered, and two days later still the great base of Smolensk and the important junction of Roslavl were occupied. On September 29th Kremenchug on the Dnieper was in Russian hands. At the end of the month, indeed, the Russians were at the Dnieper

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and the 'Melitopol Line'—from Zaporozhe to the Sea of Azov; at the doors of Kiev and the whole of the 'Winter Line'. In a little over three weeks the Germans had fallen back in some places 150 miles; and if one must recognize the skill and discipline that carried out so great a retreat in so orderly a fashion, one cannot fail to appreciate the skill and force that had compelled so massive a readjustment.

For the moment the German Command could congratulate itself on having brought back its armies behind a strong and continuous line—the 200 miles of the 'Fatherland Line' that covered White Russia to the 500 miles of the Dnieper from the Pripet to Zaporozhe and the 'Melitopol Line' which stretched from that bastion to the Sea of Azov. Within the great bend of the Dnieper excellent communications provided facilities for the rapid transfer of mobile forces and made feasible the defence of so long a front with the comparatively meagre forces available. Moreover the elaborate demolitions seemed to effect an insurance against any attack in strength for some time.

The breathing space, however, proved all too short; and when, on October 7th, the Russians announced the opening of an offensive from Vitebsk to the Taman Peninsula, the Dnieper was crossed in three places. Between the Teterev and the Pripet, Rokossovsky, indeed, had effected a crossing at least a week earlier. He had even secured a footing on the island of Trukanov Ostrov, only a quarter of a mile from Kiev. And now Vatutin established a bridgehead at Pereyaslav and Koniev south-east of Kremenchug. Although Yeremenko captured the important junction of Nevel, north of Vitebsk, the more immediate strain was anticipated on the Dnieper line and particularly about Kiev. But, while the Germans were shoring up the defences there and below Pereyaslav, the Russians struck in another quarter. The 'Melitopol Line' was strong in itself; and it was reinsured by the bridgehead at Zaporozhe from which a penetration could be outflanked. But when Tolbukhin, with the 4th Ukrainian Group, struck north and south of Melitopol on October 10th, the armoured counter-attack from Zaporozhe was swiftly

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crushed by Malinovsky who, with troops of the 3rd Ukrainian Group captured Zaporozhe and crushed in the German bridgehead. That same day Tolbukhin cut the main railway to the Crimea, and the 'Melitopol Line' was clearly no longer a 'first class life'.

It was at this point that the Russian initiative complicated Manstein's difficulties. On October 17th Koniev's 2nd Ukrainian Group broke out from their bridgehead south-east of Kremenchug, cut the railway connecting the great 'hedgehog' of Dnepropetrovsk with Kiev and pressed their advance southward towards Krivoi Rog, the great iron centre. Such was the surprise achieved by this stroke that trains, tanks and guns, as well as prisoners were captured; and the columns pressed out on each side of the breach. One, in five days, captured a town only thirty-five miles from Dnepropetrovsk; and the north-eastern corner of the Dnieper was cut off. Malinovsky swiftly crossed the river on Koniev's left while Tolbukhin proceeded steadily with the reduction of the Melitopol Line. Melitopol itself was cleared on October 23rd; and two days later Dnepropetrovsk, so long the anchor of the Dnieper defences, was evacuated. Manstein had been compelled to divert his armour to Koniev's sector and while it was engaged there, the 'Melitopol Line' collapsed and the Cossacks swept through towards the lower Dnieper. By November 4th Tolbukhin was in possession of Aleshki, a town opposite Kherson, the terminus of the Kharkov-Dnepropetrovsk railway.

Manstein succeeded in arresting Koniev's advance to the south, but at the cost of weakening the Kiev sector. Vatutin, building upon the earlier successes of Rokossovsky, now began to turn this weakness to account; and, the day before Tolbukhin appeared south of Kherson, he captured the small town of Dimer, west of the Dnieper and only twenty-three miles from Kiev. His armour swiftly forced its way southward and, two days later, cut the Zhitomir road a few miles west of Kiev; and thus he produced a neat 'coincidence' for the celebration of the twenty-sixth anniversary of the establishment of the Soviet Union by restoring to it the ancient capital of the Ukraine. Kiev was a prize of great moral and political

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value; but the Russian design aimed at the destruction of the German armies in the Dnieper bend and, accordingly, a strong column was at once sent down the Kiev railway that joins the Odessa line at Zhmerinka. The capture of that centre would block the line of supply or retreat of the forces within the Dnieper bend. On the day after the fall of Kiev this column reached and occupied Fastov, which is not only a quarter of the distance to Zhmerinka but is also the junction for the line that runs through Znamenka to Dnepropetrovsk. Other columns had turned west to occupy Zhitomir and north-west to capture Korosten and Ovruch.

This dispersion suggested a chance to deal with the threat to the forces in the Dnieper bend radically; and Manstein had swiftly concentrated six panzer and four infantry divisions for that purpose. On the day that Zhitomir fell he administered a sharp check to the column at Fastov and then, swiftly changing the direction of his counter-attack, struck up the valley of the Teteriv as far as the important road centre of Radomisl, north-east of Zhitomir. He even succeeded in recovering Korosten on November 26th; but that was the end of his adventure. And, meanwhile, on Vatutin's right Rokossovsky, with Popov on his right was attacking the southern bastion of the 'Fatherland Line', the 'hedgehog' Gomel. Rokossovsky cut its communications with the west while Popov pressed beyond the river Sozh to the north. The double pressure compelled its evacuation. Koniev, too, seized the opportunity of Manstein's preoccupation with the break through at Kiev to place his paratroops across the river at Cherkasi, through which pass the communications of Odessa to the north. At the same time his columns south of Kremenchug began to extend their positions towards the west. But for the present the threat to the German forces in the Dnieper bend was relieved.

At the end of the month the impetus of the autumn campaign had died down with a break in the weather. The 'Winter Line' was already badly compromised, though not all the hopes of the Russian Command had been fulfilled; and the striking successes of October and November gave the colour

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of anti-climax to those of the first fortnight of December. Koniev, however, was able to capture the junction of Znamenka and established himself firmly at Cherkasi. The Russians had, as usual, pursued their offensive with a complete disregard of losses; but it was evident from the make-shifts to which Manstein was driven that the Germans had suffered at a relatively higher rate; and the winter campaign was still to come.

It was against the background of these great events that the conference opened at Teheran on November 28th; and it was natural that Marshal Stalin should press again for the opening of a Second Front; natural, too, for him to twist resolutions into ambiguous formulae which he could interpret to his own taste. In the face of the differences he discerned between the two great men who had travelled such distances to suit his convenience, he was left with the role of *tertius gaudens*. He had prepared the way with some careful ground-bait. He had dissolved the Comintern; and, to leave as little to perverse imaginations as possible, he had informed Reuter's correspondent in Moscow that it was designed to expose 'the lie that "Moscow" intends to intervene in the life of other nations and to "Bolshevize" them'. But that was in May. More recently he had agreed to the election of a Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia; and the Metropolitan Sergius was later crowned in Moscow Cathedral. It all seemed too good to be true; and of course it was. But the bread was not cast upon American waters in vain.

Baits and blackmail were the effective prescription of this simple man. The baits were succulent; and the blackmail was the fear behind the pressure for the Second Front that Russia would 'go out of the war'. Mr. Stimson's words on this matter are illuminating: 'In establishing such a front lay the best hope of keeping the Russian Army in the war and *thus* ultimately defeating Hitler.'¹ From the beginning American military opinion, which at first thought little of Britain's chance of staying

¹ Stimson's letter to the President, 19th June 1942; loc. cit. p. 217 (my italics).

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the course, held Russia incapable of supporting the German attack yet maintained it imperative she should be kept in the war. It was a cross-Channel invasion that would persuade or enable her to fight on; and this she should have. But 'Overlord' (né 'Roundup') was agreed upon at Quebec; and there were many reasons for Britain's reluctance, in the summer of 1942, to adopt such a foundling for the next year. The Americans had raised the suggestion that it might even be necessary to make a 'sacrifice' landing¹ in 1942 to satisfy Russia. That was scarcely likely to reassure Mr. Churchill and the British staff who, at that moment, saw an American staff with no practical experience of war, with no obvious recognition and preparation of the means, and with no apparent appreciation of the results of a possible failure, eager to embark upon so hazardous a venture as invasion of territory held by the finest professional army in the world. When it was accepted at Quebec, the Tunisian and Sicilian campaigns were over; and the 'Mulberry' (a prefabricated) harbour, also adopted then, promised to meet some of the major difficulties of such an operation. But these did not blot out the memory that the Americans had projected the invasion while the submarine sinkings were a deadly threat, before the Middle East base was secure, before they had bought their experience in battle and, consequently, the doubt that they did not sufficiently weigh the practical difficulties.

At Teheran, therefore, Stalin found it easy to head off Mr. Churchill from any Balkan second thoughts and to reinforce the selection of 'Overlord'. Stalin did not wish to have the Allies interfering in the Balkans. It was Hitler's exasperation at Russia's insistence on her interests in that cockpit that proved the last straw in deciding him to march against the Soviet. No suspicion of any ulterior motive on Russia's part entered the American mind; and the War Department was delighted to have its preference finally endorsed without troubling about Russia's motives.

One point which Stalin made led to a critical decision

¹ The operation 'Sledgehammer' which figures in Marshall's plan, much earlier, was there described as 'a sacrifice'.

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during the Second Conference at Cairo. Stalin had insisted that he would not consider the promise to carry out 'Overlord' definite until the Commander-in-Chief was appointed. Mr. Roosevelt decided upon General Eisenhower as the Supreme Commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force. Mr. Churchill, at Quebec, had agreed to accept General Marshall, although his preference was for Field-Marshal Brooke; but Mr. Roosevelt, after a long talk with General Marshall, came to the conclusion that, whereas Marshall could have taken the place of Eisenhower as Commander of the Expeditionary Force, Eisenhower could not so easily have replaced Marshall as Chief of Staff. Since Marshall with exemplary abnegation was prepared to fall in with the President's wishes, whatever they should be, the selection was a foregone conclusion.

A final word must be added as tail-piece to this episode. Although the Supreme Commander was nominated officially on December 24th, *Pravda* printed a report on January 17th that there had been a meeting between Ribbentrop and two British representatives to arrange peace. Such suspicions did little to reassure the western Allies of Russia's good faith.

General Eisenhower's appointment was accompanied by a number of others. General Montgomery was named C.-in-C. of the British group of armies under Eisenhower. That general has stated that he would have preferred General Alexander; but he was nominated C.-in-C. the Allied armies in Italy, under General Wilson, the Supreme Commander Mediterranean. General Spatz was to command the U.S. Strategic Bombing Force against Germany. It was later announced that Air Chief Marshal Tedder was to be Deputy Commander to Eisenhower, and Lieut.-General Devers, Deputy Supreme Commander in the Mediterranean and Commander of the United States forces in that area. Admiral Sir Bertram Ramsay was to be Allied Naval C.-in-C., and Air Chief Marshal Sir Trafford Leigh Mallory, Allied Air C.-in-C. under General Eisenhower. With the appointment, in January, of Lieut.-General Bradley to command the U.S. armies in the field, the main figures who were to be respons-

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sible for the landing in France were now known. The selection was inevitably the result of a series of compromises and much of the hierarchy was unfamiliar to one or other of the Allies; but some of them, at least, were to become household names within the next sixteen months.

The interest which these announcements aroused was to some extent dwarfed by the news that Mr. Churchill had once again fallen victim to an attack of pneumonia. This was the second attack in a single year, and no one of Mr. Churchill's age could lightly sustain such an experience. Fortunately his robust constitution, indomitable spirit and expert medical attention helped him to make a swift recovery. The public could hardly imagine how heavily the weight of the conduct of the war bore upon him and President Roosevelt, more especially upon Mr. Churchill, indeed, since most of the important Allied meetings entailed upon him long and tiring journeys. Marshal Stalin, embedded in soft excuses, nursed himself to a degree which was impossible for either President Roosevelt or Mr. Churchill; and the result was shown in the illnesses of both.

It was fortunate for the Allies that the news about this time was, on the whole, astonishingly good; and the British people had little insight into the gravity of Mr. Churchill's illness, combined with a stout faith in his ability to cope with all difficulties. And on Boxing Day they were cheered to hear that an old and formidable enemy had been sent to the bottom of the sea. On that day the battle-cruiser *Scharnhorst* was sunk in an abortive attack on a Russian convoy. The constant journeys into Arctic waters which compelled British seamen to face every sort of German attack from submarines, surface craft and aircraft, make one of the unsung epics of the war. It was during an attack by the *Scharnhorst* that, fortune favouring the daring, the battle-cruiser met its end. The convoy was covered by a force of cruisers, and Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser with the *Duke of York*, the cruiser *Jamaica* and four destroyers was acting as distant cover. The *Scharnhorst* was at first driven off by the cruiser cover which then

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shadowed her as she steamed off to the south. In the afternoon the *Duke of York* caught up with her and obtained a hit; but she might still have escaped but for the gallant attack of the destroyers which secured three hits and reduced her speed. The *Duke of York* was thus enabled to come up in time to set her on fire and the *Jamaica* administered the *coup de grâce* with a torpedo. The battleship *Tirpitz* had been damaged by the attack of a midget submarine; and with the German surface craft in such condition the year closed with the promise of easier courses for the Arctic convoys.

In the Far East, too, these months had witnessed great changes. In May, under cover of airfields already established in the Aleutian Islands, landings were effected in Attu and by the end of the month, in spite of the customary bitter fighting, organized resistance was over. Later in the year, bases in the Kuriles were attacked by aircraft; and in August, Kiska, another of the Aleutians, was occupied. These minor operations, on the extreme north sea flank, played some part in diverting attention from the main operations in the distant south. The Japanese had established a series of mutually supporting positions; and the problem was to break through the outer defensive screen in order to carry the war to the Japanese homeland. Before the end of May, seventeen of the warships damaged at Pearl Harbour, including six battleships, were again in commission; and land-based and carrier aircraft were engaged in raiding the Solomons, New Guinea and the adjacent islands. Liberators from Australia ranged even as far as Macassar in Celebes and Surabaya in Java; and continued these raids for many months. But not until the end of June was it possible to launch the campaign which was to carry the United States troops through the outer screen to the Philippines.

At that time the advanced headquarters of the Japanese Command was at Rabaul, in the island of New Britain. From the airfields there and those of Wewak in New Guinea the lesser bases were adequately covered. The Japanese naval base at Truk in the chain of the Carolines covered Rabaul; and their

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positions in New Guinea were further insured by bases in the Admiralties. The opening movements of the campaign were designed to neutralize a position which enabled the enemy to maintain his hold on the Solomons and New Guinea. It was left to the Navy to reduce bases on the periphery of the Japanese screen and effectively to block any attempt at a sortie from Truk.

The campaign¹ developed on a plan analogous to a double envelopment. From the Solomons, the eastern arm was to be brought up through New Georgia (and the small island of Rendova lying close by) through Bougainville, Buka and Green Island to cut off New Britain from the east, while from bases in New Guinea the left arm would close in from the west. Such a 'pincers' would close about the whole of the Solomons Sea. At the same time, airfields would be seized in the Trobriand and Woodlark Islands, between New Guinea and the Solomons to afford close support for the passage of the Strait which separates New Guinea from New Britain. Once the New Britain airfields and particularly those of Rabaul, were captured, or effectively dominated, it would be possible to move up the coast of New Guinea far enough to extend the envelopment to the Bismarck Sea from north and south.

This campaign occupied the greater part of a year. On June 29th General Krueger's United States 6th Army landed at Nassau Bay, New Guinea, some ten miles south of Salamaua, and established the left arm of the 'pincers'; and on the following day landings were effected in the Trobriand and Woodlark Islands, and on Rendova Island. There was no opposition to the Trobriand and Woodlark expedition; but the landings on Rendova were fiercely attacked by aircraft. After 121 of the Japanese planes had been shot down, however, the occupation was swiftly completed and shore batteries, rapidly installed, were turned upon Munda Point airfield, on the south-west of New Georgia, which was the main objective of the Rendova landing. From Henderson

¹ See Map 8, p. 124.

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Field, some 200 miles away on Guadalcanal, air cover was given there and against the other base on the southern tip of Kolombangara, north-west of New Georgia.

Apart from Trobriand and Woodlark, the occupation of none of these places could be completed swiftly and without hard fighting. The long, skilful but painful trek up the Solomons chain to Green and Emirau islands was a grim test of courage and endurance; for the Japanese still fought literally to the death. But the movement up the coast of New Guinea was even more testing, calling upon every ounce of skill and imaginative initiative on the part of the staff and of disciplined courage on the part of the troops. Without them it could not have been carried out in the time even at ten times the cost. The capture of airfields separated by a few hundred miles and within the range of land-based (or, where that was impossible, of carrier-borne) fighters and their almost instantaneous utilization became part of a well-worn technique by which MacArthur 'hedge-hopped' up the coast of New Guinea; and the air-ground, and air-ground-sea, integration was developed simultaneously.

The first objective in New Guinea was the base at Lae. The troops at Nassau Bay struck inland to effect a junction with the Australians advancing from the Mubo area towards Salamaua. All these places were within range of the great Japanese base at Wewak, nearly 350 miles up the coast. In mid-August this base was put out of action by a series of surprise attacks from the airfield established at Nadzap, north-east of Lae. Almost all of the aircraft were destroyed on the four airfields and, with them, the bulk of the personnel. So complete was the destruction that the Japanese transferred the air base to Hollandia, some 300 miles farther up the coast, the 9th Australian division was landed north-east of Lae and the Lae-Salamaua area was isolated. Under cover of air attacks a strong force of paratroops was landed at Nadzap with a battery of serviceable 25-pounders, and the pressure on Lae was steadily increased. But it was Salamaua, from which troops had been withdrawn into Lae, that fell first, though it succumbed only two days earlier than Lae, on September

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16th. This was the earliest success of the campaign. But within a week the Australians were landing at Finschafen, at the eastern edge of the Huon Peninsula, the nearest point to New Britain so far occupied.

It was, indeed, only a few weeks before MacArthur felt that his position required (and justified) an attempt to deal with New Britain and its main base, Rabaul. As usual he began operations with a series of air attacks. The first of the attacks on Rabaul not only destroyed over one hundred and twenty aircraft, but also three destroyers and some shipping. The attacks had the incidental advantage of preventing interference with the operations which reduced Finschafen and the adjacent area; and, throughout November they were repeated by land-based aircraft or carrier-borne planes. In December, after this thorough preparation, landings began. Krueger's 6th Army landed at the base of Arawe, on the south coast on December 16th, and only ten days later Allied forces landed on the north coast, at Cape Gloucester; and the reduction of the island began. It was to take several months; but with these first landings firmly established, the teeth of its offensive power had been drawn and the troops were steadily moving up the coast of New Guinea. Frequently the Americans landed ahead of the Australians and began to 'beat' the Japanese out of their bush positions towards the Australians.

In New Britain it took the Allied troops seven weeks to cover twenty-one miles from Cape Gloucester; the Japanese even attempted to land there, though the convoy was broken up. Fresh Allied landings and spurts forward were made under cover of air and sea attacks on Rabaul, while the troops in the Solomons were forcing their way north-west until, on February 14th, Green Island was occupied.

This island lies north of Bougainville but in the same latitude as Rabaul. In between lies New Ireland with the small island of Emirau off its northern tip. Kavieng, the air base on New Ireland, shared in the bombardments that fell on Rabaul; but with the occupation of Green Island by American and New Zealand troops the Japanese still left in the

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Solomons were isolated; and both Rabaul and Kavieng were effectively neutralized. Before the end of the month, indeed, the considerable number of Japanese left in New Britain and New Ireland were as completely cut off as were the enemy in the Solomons. It was not, however, until March 10th that Talasea, 160 miles from Rabaul, was captured; and, with that threat, the Japanese came to realize that Rabaul had lost its usefulness as a headquarters. They decided to move to Hollandia; but, as we shall see, MacArthur anticipated this conclusion and took possession of Hollandia himself.

Meanwhile he was making his way up the coast of New Guinea under cover of these operations and with the assistance of Task forces. But it was not until the end of the first week of February that the Huon Peninsula was securely occupied; and by that time Admiral Nimitz was well advanced in his great amphibious sweeps through the central Pacific. The Gilberts, on the south-east of the outer Japanese defensive line, had been cleared in terrific battles. Tarawa was one of the bloodiest engagements of the whole campaign. At the beginning of February, with an attack on Kwajalein, he began the occupation of the atolls and islands of the Marshal group; and Task forces were already ranging as far as the Japanese naval headquarters at Truk, and its strategic outpost Ponape, and up to Saipan and Tinian, in the Marianas. At the end of March Admiral Mitscher's fast carrier force even struck at the Palau Islands, some 1,200 miles west of Truk.

It was against this background of diversions and distractions, which went far to disrupt the Japanese network of mutually supporting positions, that MacArthur found his chance of cutting off the Bismarck Sea by the occupation of the Admiralties. After dispersing a Japanese convoy in the Bismarck Sea, he followed up a reconnaissance of the 5th United States cavalry by boldly landing the rest of the cavalry on Los Negros, captured Momote airfield and, a fortnight later, landed on Manus Island, the largest of the Admiralty group. It was some days before the resistance in the bunkers and blockhouses could be brought under control. But with the airfields in his hands he secured the freedom of

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the seas north of New Guinea; and was ready for his most ambitious movement. On April 22nd, with Kinkaid's 7th Fleet under his command, and the cover of Mitscher's fast carriers and battleships, he landed at Hollandia in Dutch New Guinea. This was the longest leap forward he had made, the biggest joint operation so far launched in the Pacific and the biggest surprise. So far from expecting so long a leap forward, the Japanese, thinking Madang and Wewak more immediately threatened, had reinforced the garrisons at both places from Hollandia thus facilitating the success of the landing. The adjacent airfields and harbours were soon captured and the foundations of the next leap forward thereby laid. It was a few days after covering this expedition that the same carrier force attacked Truk again with such effect that it no longer remained a vital factor and, under cover of that diversion, MacArthur established himself at Wakde, 215 miles west of Hollandia. He made a further leap forward on May 27th when he landed infantry with tanks on Biak Island, 200 miles west of Wakde and 800 miles from Mindanao, in the Philippines.

Since the end of the preceding June, the Solomons, Bismarcks, Admiralties and New Guinea had been reconquered or neutralized. The Allied front had been advanced approximately 1,800 miles westward and about 700 miles to the north. 'These operations', said General MacArthur, 'have effected strategic penetration of the conquered empire Japan was attempting to consolidate in the south-west Pacific and have secured bases of departure for the advance to its vital areas in the Philippines and Netherlands East Indies.' Even allowing for the long drawn-out, and bitter, mopping-up operations which were left to the Australians, this was a brilliantly successful campaign. It depended, far more than is generally realised, on the intelligence service established by the heroic band of "Coast Watchers"; and it certainly advanced the campaign against Japan more than anyone could appreciate then or until the end of the war.

The other flank of the great breach which the Japanese

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had effected in the Allied positions in the south Pacific was Burma; and the Americans were impatient to break Japan's grip on it. This was not for the sake of Burma so much as because keeping China and Russia in the war were equally cardinal to the American conception of the strategy of the war. Burma was China's supply line; and for this reason General Stilwell, Marshal Chiang Kai-Shek's Chief of Staff, was intent on clearing at least the area of upper Burma which covered the line of the projected new Ledo road to China, if not the Burma road. At the Quebec Conference it was decided to increase the capacity of the air route over the 'Hump', the 23,000 feet barrier of the Himalayas, from 10,000 to 20,000 tons per month. At the same time the South-East Asia Command (S.E.A.C.) was created and Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten was appointed the Supreme Allied Commander. To a great extent, though not wholly, the appointment was due to Admiral Mountbatten's command of Combined Operations; but at Teheran the necessary landing craft were allocated to the European theatre. In fine Admiral Mountbatten's ambitious role was never to come within sight of fulfilment. General Sir George Giffard was appointed to command the army group under Mountbatten; but it never extended beyond the 14th Army which was in the capable hands of Lieut.-General Slim. The American troops were under Stilwell's control; and so were the Chinese when the orders had been countersigned by Chiang Kai-Shek. Stilwell was also Mountbatten's deputy. It was an almost Ruritanian ensemble.

To the United States, China represented a possible bolt-hole to which the Japanese Government might withdraw on defeat in the homeland to continue the war indefinitely; and it was also a great air base. General Chennault, indeed, for long maintained that he could save China in the air and for this reason his 14th Air Force was given priority over Stilwell for supplies. Stilwell's Chinese divisions trained in India were never effectively under his control; and it is an ironic reflection that had Chiang Kai-Shek agreed to the wide extension of such training as was recommended by Stilwell, he and

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China in their hour of need later on, might have had the stabilizing force that would have saved them both.

For Britain, Burma was essentially a bastion covering the approach to India, and the bridge to the east—to China, Siam and Malaya. But it was clearly recognized that the front door of Burma was Rangoon—perhaps too clearly for any earlier attempt to find an alternative. Without command of the Indian Ocean, and certainly without an adequate supply of landing craft, the use of the front door was impossible. As, by the autumn of 1943, one-third of the Japanese shipping had been sunk, another compelling inducement to maintain Chinese resistance now began to operate. The strain on Japanese shipping must be continued; and some alternative means of supply had to be devised. Brigadier Orde Wingate had suggested a means: the abandonment of ground communications and dependence on the air. Slim turned this expedient into a vital strategic development.

Japan's plans were now pitched in a more ambitious key. Subhas Chandra Bose, in October, set up a provisional government of 'Free India' in Singapore; and, with the assistance of some renegade and not very valuable Indian formations, the Japanese decided to invade India and play upon the existing disaffection to raise a rebellion against the Government. Their shortest and easiest route lay through Arakan to the Chittagong railhead; and they planned, after disposing of the British force operating there, to send their main army to cut Stilwell's communications and destroy the British troops in the Manipur area.

General Christison's advance into Arakan with the 15th corps was designed to prevent a concentration in the north by threatening the port of Akyab; and at first it appeared to play into the hands of the Japanese. Maungdaw was captured on January 10th by the 5th Indian division; but the 7th at Buthidaung was cut off by the Japanese. They hoped to block its line of retreat through the Ngakyedauk ('Oke-doke') Pass and envelop it. But instead of attempting to retreat, the division 'boxed' itself in and called upon the air for support. For three weeks this stand by 'Admin. Box' was

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maintained under conditions of almost indescribable difficulty; and then the 26th and 36th divisions, by hard fighting, reversed the envelopment, broke up the Japanese force and dispersed it into the jungle. It had originally consisted of two divisions and a unit of renegade Indians; before the end of the campaign it had lost 7,000 killed and wounded. This was the first significant British victory against the Japanese; and it was both a human and an important military success.

But meanwhile Stilwell had been pressing down Hukawng Valley from Ledo with two India-trained Chinese divisions, and he had been joined by Brigadier-General Merrill's 'Marauders'. They were moving towards Myitkyina, the headquarters of the Japanese 18th division, in the rear of which the 'Chindits' had landed with the role of diverting them from Stilwell's line of advance. The gallant Wingate, one of the rare few who conceived a fruitful development and put it into practice, was killed in an air crash on March 24th; and, with Stilwell's column held off Myitkyina, the Japanese main force, the 33rd, 15th and 31st divisions with a renegade Indian formation, was launched on its northern adventure in the second week of March.¹ As the 33rd division moved on Tiddim the 17th Indian division was withdrawn to the north. The Imphal-Kohima road was cut on April 2nd, three days later Kohima was besieged. Imphal was cut off by March 30th. India was invaded; and the Japanese were only some 25 miles from the Bengal-Assam railway.

In face of this grave threat, which Slim had foreseen, though without appreciating the speed or the severity with which it would develop, civilians and 'idle mouths' were evacuated and whole divisions were flown in from Arakan and India, while the wounded were taken out. Very quickly the Japanese, fighting in most difficult country with the weakest conceivable communications, inferior in numbers and air support, found themselves in an unenviable plight. But the position of the defenders of Kohima was grim and that of Imphal was little better. Slim, however, fought out his battle with the Japanese on his own plan to the end,

¹ See Map. 9, p. 128.

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though it was for some time touch and go in the first phase. It was one of the longest battles in the war; and in its later stages it took on the character and tempo of the battle of Passchendaele. Not until May was Kohima finally relieved; and by that time Merrill had captured the southern airfield of Myitkyina. The town itself was not occupied until August, ten weeks before Tiddim was recaptured. But when the Japanese at length fell back across the Chindwin, they were a broken army. This word seems trite to describe the results of a battle which the Japanese fought out almost beyond the limits of human nature. They had abandoned their equipment and lost, with the Arakan defeat, about 75,000 men. It was the greatest ground battle fought against the Japanese and, when it was lost, the enemy lost all chance of resisting the offensive which was in preparation.

But during the months of winter and spring Marshal Stalin was striking hammer blows in the Russian theatre. General Vatutin opened the winter campaign with a heavy attack in the early hours of Christmas Eve. The enemy troops lay at this time behind an irretrievably compromised 'Winter Line', south and east of the axis of his attack; and his objective was to cut them off, and crush them, with the help of the three other Ukrainian groups on his left. In five days he recovered almost all the ground that Manstein had recaptured, and dispersed eight panzer divisions. They left behind 15,000 dead and all the grotesque debris of the modern battlefield. Vatutin's most important tactical success was the capture of Kazatin, half-way between Fastov and the junction of Zhmerinka, on the Lwow-Odessa railway line. On the following day one of his columns re-entered Zhitomir, while another struck south-east of Kazatin; and a German commentator wrote of 'this fateful hour'.

Worse, however, was to follow; for three days later, January 3rd, another column captured Novograd Volinsk, half-way between Korosten and the important junction of Shepetovka on the Kovel-Brest line, another entered Berdichev, on the same line but nearer Kazatin, and yet another Byelaya

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Tserkov, south-east of Fastov. The threat to the Lwow-Odessa line had been significantly extended to the west. A few days later, a column was only 13 miles from Vinnitsa, two-thirds of the distance to the vital junction of Zhmerinka; and in two days another had crossed the pre-war Polish frontier and entered the junction of Sarny, on the Kiev-Kovel line. The heads of these columns were nearly 200 miles apart and, at Sarny, Vatutin was far to the east of Rokossovsky who began to press westward along the Gomel-Brest axis. Mosyr and Kalinkovichi fell into his hands while far to the south Manstein was once more striking at Vatutin's spearheads.

It was at this point that an offensive was opened on the least expected sector of the front. Leningrad was still living a life of suspended animation; but the time seemed to have arrived when the enemy could be compelled to raise the blockade completely. His positions about the former capital were not free from peril in view of his demonstrated inability to maintain the southern front, and the Russians determined to profit by his weakness. On January 15th Generals Govorov and Meretskov again launched converging attacks; and, while Govorov recovered towns immediately south of Leningrad, Meretskov captured Novgorod, at the northern end of Lake Ilmen. The chance of cutting off the forces between these two thrusts began to brighten when the obstinately defended junction of Mga, on which so many earlier hopes had foundered, was captured on January 22nd; but although, five days later, Leningrad and Kronstadt were declared completely free from the blockade and even from artillery fire, it was another fortnight before Luga was captured. Lying in the mouth of the sack into which the Germans had been compressed, it was held until the troops were evacuated; and by this time Govorov was at the northern gate of Estonia, and soon through it.

He followed up the capture of Luga by sweeping up to the eastern shores of Lake Peipus while Meretskov, breaking through at Staraya Russa, pressed on to occupy the junction of Dno on the line which had for long formed the main lateral communications of the Germans. Nearly four weeks before,

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Novo Sokolnichi, on the same line, had been entered; and when Kholm and Dno fell it became obvious that the Germans were withdrawing on the northern, as they had earlier withdrawn on the southern, sector of the front. How obstinately it had been held was shown by the number of guns destroyed (1,962) or captured (1,852) in the first month of the Russian offensive during which the losses of the German 18th Army were put at 50,000 killed and 7,200 prisoners.

Vatutin was still striking over a wide arc with bold opportunism. Columns on his right gathered in Rovno and Luck, on the Shepetovka-Brest line, and even Shepetovka itself; while others on his left co-operated with Koniev in the Zvenigorodka-Shpola area, not only to break down the defence of Kanev, which had penned in the bridgehead below Pereyaslav, and Smyela, which had blocked the advance from Cherkasi, but also to cut off a force of nine infantry and one panzer division. This powerful force was surrounded, hustled about and even ejected from its headquarters at Korsun, as it strove to break out to join Manstein's relief column from Uman. Junkers planes removed about 2,000 officers before, on February 17th, some 18,200 officers and men surrendered. It was estimated that it had also lost 55,000 killed; and the rest contrived to make their way back to neighbouring German units.

A similar process had been developing on Koniev's other flank. At Nikopol and Krivoi Rog, centres of manganese and iron deposits respectively, a stubborn defence was maintained until the beginning of February when Malinovsky broke through between the two and captured first the junction of Apostolovo and then Nikopol. In these engagements 15,000 Germans were killed and 2,000 taken prisoner, and the position of Krivoi Rog so gravely undermined that, as the Russians pressed down the right bank of the Dnieper, it fell on February 22nd, four months after Koniev had first advanced against it. As the winter offensive lost its impetus, Rokossovsky, with the capture of Rogachev on the right bank of the upper Dnieper, improved his position at the southern angle of the triangle which has its apex in Minsk.

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Under cover of tactical movements, however, the Ukrainian Groups were now being reinforced and reorganized for the spring offensive. The 'Winter Line' was no more; but lack of concentration in Vatutin's operations had prevented the offensive realizing its full promise in either cutting off Manstein's armies within the Dnieper bend or compelling them to withdraw beyond the Dniester.

The spring offensive, which opened on March 4th with an attack west of the lower Sluch, saw the alignment of the four distinguished Russian commanders who were to co-operate in the major tasks of the last phase of the war. Marshal Zhukov had replaced Vatutin and, with Marshal Koniev, General Malinovsky and General Tolbukhin, he now struck the first blow in a short campaign that was to complete the approach march in the eastern European theatre. Zhukov was the ablest of the Russian field commanders; and Marshal Vasilevsky, the brilliant chief of staff, was associated with him in co-ordinating the right wheel of the armies on his left from the Dnieper bend to the Pruth-Dniester front. When Zhukov struck south on a 100-mile front he effected a wide penetration of the enemy front and almost immediately cut the Lwow-Odessa railway. In less than a week his troops were engaged in the streets of the great junction of Tarnopol while, nearly 130 miles to the east, his left was moving in upon Vinnitsa. By this time, too, Malinovsky and Koniev had delivered hammer blows; and the German armies, apparently, never regained their balance until the force of the offensive was spent.

Koniev's attack so disrupted the defence upon his sector that Uman and Zvenigorodka were swiftly captured; and Malinovsky was able to force the crossings of the Ingulets, capture a series of towns on both sides of the Nikolaev railway and advance to within 30 miles of Kherson. With Zhukov gathering in Dubno and Kremenets on his right and Malinovsky capturing Kherson on his left, Koniev followed the disorganized Germans with such speed that, after crossing the Bug at Bratislav, and the Odessa railway at the junction of Vapnarka, he was able to force the Dniester at Soroka and

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Yampol. At Yampol, indeed, he crossed the river bridge into Bessarabia on the heels of the fleeing Germans. He also captured Mogilev-Podolski on the Dnieper while Zhmerinka and Vinnitsa fell into Zhukov's hands.

A few days later Zhukov struck south to capture Zalesczyk, on the north bank of the Dniester, less than 25 miles north of Cernauti; and the following day he seized the junction of Proskurov, 60 miles east of Tarnopol. Malinovsky had by this time reached the lower Bug at Voznesensk, while Koniev was taking Pervomiask higher up the river. It was exactly three weeks since Zhukov had struck the first blow in the spring offensive and already the face of the war in the south had changed beyond recognition. The following day Koniev captured Balti and, after forcing the Dniester on a front of nearly 100 miles, occupied a stretch of about 50 miles on the Pruth. The same day Tarnopol and Kamenets-Podolsk were surrounded by Zhukov who proceeded to capture the junction of Kolomea, on the Lwow-Cernauti line; and the next day, March 30th, he entered Cernauti (Cernowitz), the capital of the Bukovina, the last link between the German armies, north and south of the Carpathians. On the last day of the month he captured the great junction of Stanislavov.

Swift, powerful and precise blows such as these, by-passing strong points and overrunning the weak, left behind a number of pockets from which the Germans failed to escape in time. Malinovsky had already cut off several such pockets; and, after the capture of Kherson on March 13th, he succeeded in trapping near Nikolaev part of the reconstituted German 6th Army killing some 10,000 and capturing 4,000, though Nikolaev itself held out for another fortnight. A similar encirclement was now completed about Skala. This town had been by-passed by Zhukov's advance east, west and south; and fourteen or fifteen divisions, five of them panzer divisions, were cut off. Once again, as at Korsun, Manstein accepted the challenge. From Buczacz, 40 miles to the northwest, he struck a series of blows which developed into heavy armoured battles. These continued for ten days until April 11th when the bulk of the surrounded troops succeeded in

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breaking out, leaving 26,000 dead and 7,000 prisoners behind. The impetus of the spring offensive on the mainland was ebbing away. Zhukov was at the Czechoslovak frontier. The Pruth had been crossed. Koniev was even in possession of several towns across the upper Sereth. Malinovsky, echeloned on his left rear, entered Nikolaev, after a stubborn battle, on March 28th and crossed the Bug to seize Razdelnaya. This junction some 40 miles north of Odessa, on the Lwow-Odessa railway, was the door of the last land route into Bessarabia. North of it he cut off a number of German divisions who surrendered after a few days hopeless struggle; and two days later, April 10th, Odessa was abandoned. Malinovsky forced the lower Dniester and so brought his right up to Koniev's left.

Meanwhile General Tolbukhin had made great progress in the reduction of the Crimea. The positions of Perekop and Akmanai had been fortified to block invasion from the north and east respectively; and such was their strength that frontal attack offered no prospect of swift success even at great cost. Tolbukhin consequently delivered his main blow across the Siwash lagoon under cover of the frontal assaults expected of him. The surprise proved decisive. There were five German divisions and seven weak Rumanian divisions in the peninsula; but this bold attack across a lagoon, no longer frozen, turned the defences at Perekop and Akmanai. Four days after the Russian guns had opened fire on Perekop, the junction of Djankoi fell; and two days later, April 13th, the Russians reached Simferopol, two-thirds of the distance to Sevastopol. They had also effected landings at several places on the south and west coast. Sevastopol was the last hope; but, attacked on May 7th it capitulated two days later and, with the surrender of the last of the garrison west of Sevastopol, the campaign was over. It had occupied just over a month.

The whirlwind spring campaign ended with the Russians a few miles east of Kovel, in possession of Tarnopol, at the eastern frontier of Czechoslovakia, in the Bukovina and across the Sereth on a front stretching to the Pruth and thence down the Dniester. In actual fighting the campaign

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on the mainland had not occupied more than five weeks. 'For the losses inflicted on the enemy, for the extent of the disruption of his armies, for the moral effect of re-entering territory which was in Russian hands before the outbreak of the war, for the brilliant tactics, the swift movement, the disconcerting change of the cutting-point of the attack, this offensive was unique. On many occasions the Germans were hard pressed to avoid annihilation by repeated encirclements. Even when they contrived to escape they did so only after a severe mauling. They suffered terrific losses; and, if such results could not be attained without heavy casualties on the Russian side, the relative loss remained higher in the German ranks.'¹ This comment was written not many months after the events it describes; and I find no reason to change it now.

In Italy a fugitive ray of hope had lightened the gloom of the deadlock. In the third week of January, the 5th Army opened an attack on the formidable barrier of the Garigliano; and the British secured a bridgehead about Minturno while the Americans and French were making progress in the hills. But, so that former experiences should not be repeated and the attack peter out, provision was made to turn the position and compel retirement or surrender. The American 6th corps, including a British division, under Major-General Lucas, landed at the tiny port of Anzio, deep in the rear of the enemy and only 30 miles from Rome, in the early hours of January 22nd. The landing was a complete surprise; and if the force had moved swiftly to the Alban hills it might have fulfilled its mission. Unfortunately precious days were wasted in consolidation, and the German commander, Kesselring, seeing his communications in no immediate danger, calmly concentrated for a formal counter-attack, while containing the force within limits. He delivered three heavy counter-attacks in February, and penned the force into a constricted area under almost intolerable conditions.

For three months, in which first hopes and first anxieties

¹ *Foothold in Europe*, p. 202.

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had passed, the force—50,000 strong—merely served to pin down a number of Germans; and, meanwhile, three abortive attempts were made to capture the small town of Cassino which blocked the southern entrance to the Via Casilina. The first attack was fought to a standstill in the first week of February; and then it was decided that the check came from the abbey on Monastery Hill which, it was thought, was occupied at least for purpose of observation. It was never occupied; but this did not prevent it being destroyed by heavy bombers on February 15th. The following day Cassino was again bombed and, in the early hours of the 18th, the second infantry attack was made. It fared so badly so quickly that Alexander stopped it. It was thought that heavier bombing might force the obstinate lock; and, on March 15th, 1,400 tons of bombs were dropped on Cassino. A heavy bombardment followed; but the destruction was now found to be so great that the infantry were deprived of tank support for thirty-six hours while the bull-dozers cleared a path. For a week the desperate battle continued and then, as the town had never been more than half won, it was decided to abandon the action. Spring in Italy, indeed, had failed to reach the Allied staff.

For some time during these months there had been movements that suggested the prelude to a great military expedition. Such conclusions were reinforced when it became known that the United States had requested Eire to dismiss Axis diplomatic and consular representatives. Eire, on March 10th, refused; and three days later the British Government suspended all travel between Britain and Eire. On April 1st a coastal ban was imposed from the Wash to Land's End; and, on the 18th, the ban fell upon transmission or reception of code telegrams by diplomatic missions other than Allied, and also on their personnel leaving England. Six days later all overseas travel was banned. These actions could only mean the determined attempt to prevent news of happenings in England from reaching the enemy.

For some time, too, strategic bombing had been turned

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upon enemy communications and transport. This was notably the case in Italy. And then, on May 11th, General Alexander delivered on the Gustav line a heavy attack which he called 'The First Blow'.

Chapter Six

THE FINAL ASSAULT

May 1944–May 1945

The hour had struck for the general assault on the enemy. He was still in possession of central and western Europe; but, in Estonia and Rumania, Russia was already poised for the last great battles which, in conjunction with attacks in western Europe, should bring him to his knees. Even in the Far East the enemy's outer defences had been driven in and the Allies were about to attack his inner line. East, west and south the air campaign was clearing the way for the grand assault. In the west and south the signs could not be misread. The Mediterranean air forces had been engaged for some time in raiding the communications of Kesselring's armies, and in the west the attack had not only gone far to destroy the communications but had critically weakened his air arm in itself and in its motive power.

In May 1944 the issue could not be in doubt; it was only the time and *manner* of the enemy's collapse that remained problematical and of these, though it was scarcely realized at the time, and not at all by the Americans, the latter was the more important. General Eisenhower has been quite frank about his view of the problem; and he was left a large measure of liberty in interpreting it, and could always depend upon the full support of General Marshall. The unquestionable integrity of such men as he and Mr. Stimson is a thing of which any nation could be proud; but unfortunately it operated in support of General Eisenhower among whose considerable gifts the statesmanship of the great commanders found no place.

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Admittedly no entirely sane person would wish to continue the war a day, or even an hour longer than was necessary to secure the basis of peace. But this clearly depended upon where victory found the Western Powers. The war was begun, and by the Western Powers fought throughout, for a political concept—to restore the Rule of Law. But from Russia's point of view the end and inspiration could only be the advancement of her own policies; and these two purposes were diametrically opposed, however similar a cunning coat of varnish could make them appear.

General Eisenhower's immediate purpose—the speediest victory—was, therefore, irrelevant; and by stubbornly opposing any move on Austria and Hungary, and any attempt to take Berlin, he was conforming to his own plan but defeating the purpose which had made Britain and France go to war and united America in support of her great armies. Whether Poland lost its freedom to Russia or Nazi Germany must be immaterial to the Western Powers; and, if the end of the war should find Russia in occupation not only of Poland but also of Austria, Hungary and the Balkans, only the completely self-deceived could believe these countries could nourish any hope of freedom.

The issue, however, was still open when General Alexander launched what his Order of the Day described as the 'first blow' in the battles to be launched 'from east to west, from north to south', which would 'result in the final destruction of the Nazis'. Alexander had transferred the bulk of the 8th Army west of the Apennines, and when he struck on May 11th he had a considerable superiority on the 30-mile front between Cassino and the sea. In three days the Gustav line, south of the Liri valley, was broken; in five it was overrun. Cassino was taken from the west by the British the next day, and on the 18th the Poles cleared Monastery Hill after heavy fighting. But Kesselring had now decided to withdraw; and on the 23rd the Anzio force broke out. The air forces now took their revenge on the choked communications; but the stubborn stand south-east of Rome held off the advance until June 4th when the capital was at last entered and

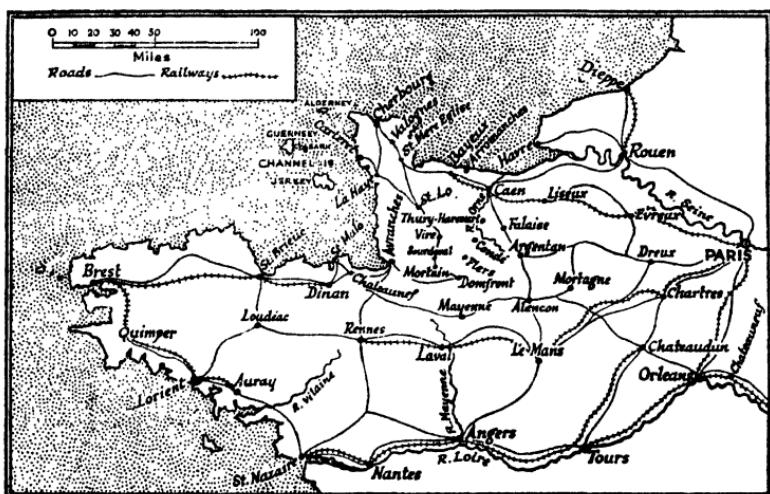
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the pursuit spread to the north. It was a heartening, if far from bloodless victory; and two days later the Allies landed in Normandy.

Operation 'Overlord' had, as we have seen, been the American plan since March 1942 when a Lieut.-Colonel Eisenhower had been brought to United States headquarters and promoted Brig.-General. But when he returned to England at the beginning of 1944 he had already a great, probably a unique, achievement to his credit. He had for the first time in history formed a really united staff from the officers of two different nations and had won the respect and even liking of both United States and British officers. It was notable, indeed, that in the differences of opinion between the British Staff and commanders and those of the United States, General Eisenhower's views found as spontaneous and loyal support from both ingredients of his staff. Now, however, another staff formed on the same principle of ignoring nationality had been at work for many months on the plans for 'Overlord' and these came under the supervision and control of Eisenhower and Montgomery.

Tremendous preparations had been made in England, the main base of the operation. Much of southern England came under military control as the troops which were designed to effect a landing and those which were to support them were moved into the area and concentrated under conditions that adequately satisfied the needs of security. An embargo had been laid on the movement of diplomatic personnel and even their communications with their respective Foreign Offices. The plans for the invasion had been revised on the insistence of General Montgomery, who was made Commander-in-Chief of all ground forces until a complete United States Group could be deployed on the Continent, and who rightly thought the front should be extended to accommodate five divisions. This decision necessitated a greater number of assault craft and, as a consequence, the date of the invasion had to be postponed from May 1st to the end of the month; and the original plan for a simultaneous attack from the south of France had to be abandoned. 'Anvil' as this

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13. The Invasion of Normandy

operation was called was, therefore, planned for August 15th when its main *raison d'être*, the detention of German troops in the south, had disappeared. The determination to use them there, rather than north of the Adriatic or in the chance to end the Italian campaign by a landing behind the Gothic line, was maintained by General Eisenhower and it prevailed.

The site selected for the invasion was the Baie de la Seine, between the Orne river and the neck of the Cotentin Peninsula. The Pas de Calais area would have entailed shorter sea communications and would have permitted easier fighter support; but the fortifications there were so much more elaborate and the expectation of attack so complete that the selection would have been foolhardy. But among the many attempts to mislead the enemy, was the cunning fostering of this expectation; and to its success the invasion owed much.

In western Europe the Germans had some sixty divisions, about a quarter of the field force of the German Army under the command of Field-Marshal von Rundstedt. Two-thirds of them formed Group 'B', the 15th Army in the Pas de

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Calais and the 7th Army in Normandy and Brittany, commanded by Field-Marshal Rommel. The rest, Group 'G', under General Blaskowitz, comprised the 1st Army in the Biscay coast area and the 19th Army in the Riviera. There was also a panzer group under General Schweppenburg; eight panzer divisions actually took part in the Normandy battles before the end; but only on one occasion, the battle of Mortain, were they used in a formal counter-attack. For Montgomery had decided that his best plan was, by threatening to break out on the eastern flank, to draw the German reserves into that area and so clear the way for General Bradley's American armies to break out from the western flank.

On the morning of June 6th, the 3rd, 3rd Canadian and 50th divisions landed on the Normandy beaches with combat teams from the 29th and 1st United States divisions immediately on their right and the 4th United States division to the right of them. They were landed from an immense gathering of ships shepherded and protected by two task forces, the naval cover being in the hands of Admiral Ramsay. Their way had been prepared by a great air bombardment; and east of the British left flank the 6th airborne division had been dropped while the 101st and 82nd United States airborne divisions had been landed on the west of the American right. The care and elaboration of the preparatory work—the lifting of the cunning underwater defences, the waterproofing of tanks and the rest—baffle description; and provision had been made for supply in the initial phase by the 'Gooseberry' and 'Mulberry', prefabricated breakwaters and harbours respectively.

Serious opposition was only encountered to the west of the 50th division where the 1st American division ran into a German field division carrying out an exercise. But elsewhere the landings were successfully carried out, with less loss than was expected, though most of the immediate objectives, like the important inland port of Caen, lay beyond reach. The build-up proceeded steadily, the units were linked up and by the end of the first week a bridgehead extending

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over 50 miles and from 8 to 12 miles deep had been established.

What most contributed to this success was the differences between Rommel and Rundstedt. The Allied air forces had isolated the area of the battlefield by destroying the Seine and Loire bridges; they kept it isolated by constant bombing of the communications and rolling stock; and for some time the German Command could not convince itself that the landing in Normandy was the main, or at any rate the sole, blow. But there was no doubt in Rundstedt's mind that his views of the proper course to deal with an invading force differed from those of Rommel. The latter preferred to destroy the invasion on the beaches; Rundstedt favoured the Anzio tactics —check, contain and heavy counter-attack. In the event, the thin checking force was strengthened by the bulk of the infantry; and the panzer divisions were forced to intervene prematurely, before concentration. Not only that, they found it almost impossible to disengage; and by his forcing tactics Montgomery nourished that condition.

It was at this point the Germans intervened with the first of Hitler's 'secret weapons'. On June 13th the first V1, 'flying bomb', fell upon England. It was a jet-propelled, pilotless plane, with a range of about 150 miles and an explosive charge of nearly a ton; and, until the launching sites were overrun, it caused confusion, a considerable number of casualties and great destruction. Although not a third of those launched reached the London area, 5,649 people were killed and 16,194 injured. From the first the A.A. defences were able to destroy about a third; and, by the end, over two-thirds were being accounted for. The second 'secret weapon' was the V2, a flying rocket with about the same bursting-charge, which began at almost the same time that the V1 stopped; and it continued until the following March. Over 1,000 reached England and 1,675 fell on Antwerp and other continental targets. Casualties in England from V2 were 2,574 killed and 6,524 injured. The rockets were in many ways more intimidating because their approach was soundless.

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Attacks had been delivered on the Peenemunde research station and on the launching sites and depots in August 1943, and were continued systematically on the sites and depots from the following December; and they undoubtedly delayed the onset of the attack and limited its scope. Hitler had some reason for his faith in the 'secret weapons'; and it is difficult even to imagine what might have happened if the assault had begun some months earlier and had embraced the invasion ports. London might have been made uninhabitable; and the orderly concentration in southern England for the invasion could hardly have taken place. If the invasion could have been prevented for a few months, it is impossible to predict how the war would have gone; for considerable progress had also been made with nuclear fission. Even if the air-raids did not check the Peenemunde research as much as was at first thought, and the bombardment of the launching sites and the depots was not ideally effective, together they delivered the Allies from perils to which it is impossible to assign a limit.

The two immediate objectives in the second phase of the battle of Normandy were Cherbourg and Caen, the latter mainly for the good airfield country to the south-east. The need of ports was obvious. It was for this reason that the 'Mulberry' had been devised; and the stormy weather in the first phase, with its immediate check on supply, demonstrated the need at a critical moment. It was for this reason that the Americans began the attack across the neck of the Cotentin Peninsula, and in hard fighting they reached its western coast, on the 18th, while the 2nd Army was occupying the Germans' attention at Villers Bocage, Tilly and before Caen. It was on the following day that a four days' storm prevented most of the landing of supplies and reinforcements and destroyed the Americans' 'Mulberry'. But the storm did not prevent General Collins's U.S. 7th corps capturing Cherbourg. In the campaign against this port the Americans captured 39,000 prisoners and buried 4,000 dead; and, though it was late August before the port could be used for heavy traffic, the victory was of vital importance.

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The way was now clear for the Americans to concentrate their strength towards the south and achieve a suitable launching site for the break-out. This Montgomery had expected to take place on July 3rd; but the difficulties of the terrain on Bradley's front, and the rains, made it impossible until July 25th.

Meanwhile the necessity of engaging on the British flank the maximum strength of German armour remained. At the end of June, seven panzer divisions and parts of an eighth—two-thirds of the German armour in the west—were being engaged on the 20-mile front of the 2nd Army, between Caumont and Caen; but one had appeared on the American front. Operations for the capture of Caen were, therefore, pressed, and it fell on July 9th, after the bombers had been brought to the battlefield. As on their first intervention in Normandy the effect was much the same as at Cassino. Craters and rubble blocked the advance. Some days later, after a still heavier bombardment, a determined attack was delivered east of Caen in which the 7th, 11th and Guards armoured divisions were engaged. By the third day, July 20th, despite heavy resistance and a steadily increasing downpour, an advance of about six miles had been made; and the threat to Falaise had begun to appear.

Preceded by a very heavy air bombardment and with close support by fighters and fighter-bombers the Americans began their break-out operation on July 25th while the Canadians attacked down the Falaise road. In two days the Germans were falling back over the whole American front. Avranches and Granville were captured on the last day of the month and General Patton's 3rd Army came into being. One of his corps turned into Brittany. It was at Rennes on August 3rd; two days later it was not far from Brest, and on the 6th it was at the Loire fifteen miles from Nantes. This was a real break through; and no other of Patton's achievements had quite the colour of this episode. The 2nd Army and the 1st United States Army had in the meantime wheeled to the east; and the German position in Normandy was threatened with imminent dissolution.

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Rundstedt had been replaced by Field-Marshal von Kluge in the first days of July and about a fortnight later, July 20th, a deliberate attempt was made to kill Hitler. The bomb only wounded him, and exemplary punishment was dealt out to all who could be identified as associated with the plot. Even Rommel, severely wounded on July 17th, was only given the alternative of suicide. The main effect of the incident upon Hitler seems to have been an exaggeration of his megalomania; and its first manifestation was the order to Kluge to counter-attack towards Mortain. It had, of course, a specious attraction; for west of Mortain lies Avranches and the communications which supplied Patton. Cut them and he would be immobilized and rendered defenceless. Five panzer divisions and two of infantry were used for the attack; but the Americans held their positions and the Allied air forces, particularly the rocket-firing Typhoons of the R.A.F., destroyed numbers of German tanks. By August 12th the Germans had begun to withdraw from Mortain; but by this time Montgomery had ordered the Americans to turn north through Alençon to form the southern arm of an envelopment in the region of Falaise on which the British and Canadians were converging from the north. The pocket was not closed until August 19th and in the following days it was cleared up.

Meanwhile Patton's 3rd Army was speeding eastwards. On August 15th it was near Dreux and Chartres; the next day it was in Orleans, and by the 19th it had a bridgehead across the Seine at Mantes. A few days later American troops were at Troyes. Paris had caught the infection of these swift developments and the French Resistance forces anticipated the American encircling movement by their concerted rising. The American 5th corps, led by the 2nd French armoured division, was accordingly directed to Paris. On August 25th the city was entered and the Germans surrendered to General Leclerc. The 1st Canadian Army and 2nd British Army were then moving to the Seine.

The greatest seaborne invasion in history had already fulfilled the most ambitious hopes; and the battle of Normandy

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was at an end. The enemy had lost about half a million men, 210,000 of them being prisoners; he had also lost an immense amount of material. More men and much more material than was expected had been withdrawn across the Seine; but this was indeed a satisfying victory. Montgomery says that the battle 'was fought exactly as planned before the invasion'. This is, of course, ridiculous; and it does little justice to his achievement. The battle developed very differently; and, indeed, it is perhaps his greatest claim to fame that while maintaining the essentials of his original plan, he was able to adapt them, as at Alamein and Mareth, to the changing situation.

By the end of the battle of Normandy 'Dragoon' (*né Anvil*) had made satisfying progress. Some time before the Americans and French landed between Cannes and Toulon, on August 15th, the garrisons of the Biscay and Mediterranean coasts had become a mere façade and, therefore, the main reason for the operation had passed. But now a fresh reason was found—the need of Marseilles as a port of supply. All the immediate difficulties could have been overcome by air transport, *if the need had been foreseen*. But reliance had been placed on the Brittany ports; and, while Hitler insisted on destroying all the ports and not even yielding their sites before being compelled by overwhelming force, the problem of supply was critical and no adequate improvisation could be expected to solve it. Eisenhower, probably quite rightly, thought that political motives were responsible for the suggestion that the force already prepared should be diverted to the head of the Adriatic to open the gate of central Europe; but this was to commend, and not to condemn, the diversion.

'Dragoon', however, was an immediate success, and the troops made swift progress to the west and up the Rhône valley. The F.F.I., who had assisted in isolating the Normandy battlefield, co-operated on the left of the advance from the South, as they were also assisting the Americans on the Biscay coast. Within a fortnight French troops had cleared Marseilles and Toulon; and the northward advance had reached Lyons by September 3rd. Eight days later they had

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linked up with Patton's troops at Somberon, north-west of Dijon; and on September 15th General Patch's 7th Army and General de Lattre de Tassigny's French 1st Army came under General Eisenhower's command as General Dever's 6th Army Group.

By this time, indeed, the situation had changed almost, it seemed, unbelievably. On August 31st Montgomery had been promoted Field-Marshal; and the following day he handed over the tactical control of the ground forces to General Eisenhower. What was to be done next had been the subject of some discussion. Montgomery had suggested that 'one powerful full-blooded thrust across the Rhine and into the heart of Germany, backed by the whole of the resources of the Allied armies, would be likely to achieve decisive results'.¹ This was no 'fantastic'² project. Indeed, the main objection to it, the problem of supply, would have no validity if it had been as weak a 'thrust' as it has been represented; and the possibilities must remain a matter of speculation. At least such a thrust would have fared better than the broad front strategy, the alternative which the Supreme Commander favoured, either through fear of the political consequences of selecting Montgomery, or fear of the inherent risks.

The problem of supply being vital, Antwerp took the centre of the stage; and one of Montgomery's columns—the 11th armoured division—reached the port on September 4th. The Guards armoured division was in Brussels the preceding evening. Patton was at Nancy on September 5th and General Hodges's American 1st Army was at Namur and Charleroi. A few days later they were at Liège and on the 11th they crossed the German frontier to reach the defences of the Siegfried Line on the 15th, and breach it east of Aachen the following day.

While the opening of Antwerp was the first necessity of the hour, it was realized that to eject the Germans from their

¹ *Normandy to the Baltic* by Field Marshal the Viscount Montgomery, p. 118–119.

² *Crusade in Europe* by General Eisenhower, p. 321.

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commanding positions on each side of the Scheldt estuary might require a prolonged and difficult operation. In the meantime it was desirable to safeguard immediate security; and if a bridgehead could be established across the lower Rhine, in the neighbourhood of Arnhem, it would satisfy this condition and outflank the Siegfried defences. Montgomery's lodestone suggested the plan; but it was such perfectly valid considerations as these that were responsible for the epic of Arnhem. The lower Rhine lay over sixty miles beyond the 2nd Army's bridgehead across the Meuse-Scheldt canal, and to accomplish this operation in one swift blow entailed the use of airborne troops to seize the water-crossings, and a break through from the south with the British armour to make contact with them.

The American 101st airborne division was landed to secure the two canal crossings north of Eindhoven, the American 82nd airborne division was dropped below Nijmegen to capture the Maas crossing at Grave, the Maas-Waal bridge south-west of Nijmegen and the road and railway bridge at Nijmegen itself; and the British 1st airborne division was dropped at Arnhem. September 17th, when the airborne fleets took off, was fine; but there was not sufficient air transport available to land the troops in one lift, and bad weather intervened to postpone the reinforcements opposite Arnhem and about Nijmegen. This was the critical sector; and the delay in, and south of, Arnhem was vital. After a magnificent stand there, until the night of September 25th, the bridgehead was abandoned and Major-General Urquhart and 2,400 men were evacuated. Almost three times that number were lost in enabling the 2nd Army to advance its positions about sixty miles to the north. Such a plan, so brilliantly carried out almost to complete success, should dispose for ever of the taunt that Montgomery was always governed by excessive caution.

The clearing of the Scheldt estuary had then to be accomplished. Most of the Channel ports had already been taken in their advance by the Canadian 1st Army which had to overcome the resistance south of the Scheldt in conditions that



14. The Arnhem, Ardennes and Rhineland Battlefields

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rivalled Passchendale. Walcheren was taken by an amphibious operation and at the end of the first week of November, in conjunction with the 2nd Army, the line of the Maas was reached. Antwerp was not in operation until November 28th when, in spite of persistent attack by rockets—V2—it began to play its part as the main avenue of supply. Marseilles and Toulon had been in use for some two months; and, perhaps, the handling of the needs of supply, brilliantly accomplished by the Staff—the ‘Red Balls Highways’—was the Allies’ greatest achievement of these months. Model’s reanimation of a Western force that seemed at the point of final collapse in early September was undoubtedly the greatest, and most vital, success on the German side.

But, meanwhile, Eisenhower had brought the great Allied armies up to the Siegfried defences, the ‘West Wall’. The Americans had breached them again in October; and in early November, as the first snows began to fall, a series of attacks were delivered in order to bring the centre and left up to the Rhine. Patton began on November 8th, Montgomery followed; and in little more than a week the French 1st Army and Bradley’s American 9th and 1st Armies were involved. Geilenkirchen was enveloped by the British 2nd Army in conjunction with the American 9th Army; the last pocket across the Maas was eliminated by Montgomery, while the 9th Army reached the Roer; Strasbourg was captured and the French entered Belfort and reached the Rhine at Mulhouse but had not the strength to eliminate the Colmar ‘pocket’. Patch’s American 7th Army broke into the West Wall north-east of Wissembourg; Patton took Metz and crossed the Saar and Hodges’s American 1st Army, which had taken Aachen in October, was engaged in bloody battles in its struggles in the Hurtgen forest.

On November 21st Eisenhower was full of confidence when he addressed correspondents at headquarters. ‘The German has to be hit with everything we’ve got’, he said, ‘and finally the breaking point will come’; but this free translation of Napoleonic theory entailed great risks in application. As the days wore on, Eisenhower was using in the Aachen sector as

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many as seventeen full divisions; and at one point there were ten divisions on a twenty-four-mile front, as many as it was thought practicable to deploy.¹ Infantry replacements became an acute problem.² It seemed that one had turned a page or two back to the Somme battles of 1916, and the obsession with numbers and material.

And then, suddenly, to the surprise and dismay of the patient spectator, came the inevitable sequel. The enemy, finding a sector which had been almost stripped to provide the concentration farther north, launched a heavy counter-stroke—the battle of the Ardennes—on December 16th on almost the same sector as that on which he broke through in 1940, and with very much the same purpose. It was actually the same general. The oldest, and most independent, but also most skilful of Hitler's field commanders, Field-Marshal von Rundstedt, was recalled once more. The weather had been dull and cloudy for some days and this, by preventing Allied air reconnaissance, determined the selection of the date of the attack and assured complete tactical surprise. The plan was to effect a breach in the American 1st Army front between Monchau and Echternach, cross the Meuse at Liège and Namur and seize Antwerp. This would at once reproduce a situation similar to that in northern France in 1940. The British Army Group with the American 9th and part of the American 1st Armies would be cut off; and the imagination can supply the rest.

Rundstedt had at his disposal the 6th and 5th panzer armies, each of four divisions, and seventeen infantry, parachute and panzer grenadier divisions; and at first his success was dismaying. In three days he had penetrated twenty miles; in four there was a deep gap in the 1st Army front between Durbuy and Bastogne. But already the obstinate resistance at such places as St. Vith and Bastogne had imposed a check on the advance by compelling a detour. On the 20th Montgomery, who had already brought down elements of his

¹ Report by the Supreme Commander to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on the operations in Europe of the Allied Expeditionary Force, p. 88.

² *Crusade in Europe* by General Eisenhower, pp. 364, 374.

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30th corps to cover the Meuse crossings, took over command of the 9th and 1st Armies on Eisenhower's orders; and his first concern was to limit the breach in the front by strengthening its northern flank. The same process was being carried out in the south by Bradley; and Eisenhower was extending the left of the American 7th Army to release Patton for a counter-stroke from the south. He found that the moral and political effect would not permit him to withdraw from Strasbourg, and the Colmar 'pocket' prevented him handing over the Rhine front to the French 1st Army.

The German advance continued; and, finding the direct route to Liège blocked by the stand in the Stavelot and the Malmedy area, the 6th panzer army turned south-west towards Hotton and Marche while the 5th panzer army struck west and north-west. On December 23rd the German spear-head reached Ciney; and, two days later, the 29th British armoured brigade were engaged near Celles, only four miles from the Meuse. But by this time the enemy had reached the limits of his strength; and the counter-attack of the American 3rd Army had reached Bastogne. The weather had changed, and the Allied air forces began to intervene decisively. The counter-attack from the north began on January 3rd; the next day the British 30th corps intervened on the right of the American 7th corps, and gradually the enemy was compelled to retire. On January 16th the American 1st and 3rd Armies met at Houffalize. The 1st Army now reverted to General Bradley's command; and the Germans were steadily driven back.

This had been a costly venture for both sides; but it was fatal for the Germans. The Allied losses were 77,000 officers and men, of whom 8,000 were killed and 21,000 missing or taken prisoner. The Germans admitted a loss of 90,000; the Allied command put the figure at 120,000. 'The battle of the Ardennes', says Montgomery, 'was won primarily by the staunch fighting qualities of the American soldier.'¹ That is no more than the bare truth. The (American) 7th armoured division at St. Vith and the 101st airborne division at Bas-

¹ *Normandy and the Baltic*, p. 181.

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togne won universal admiration. It was the distribution and Intelligence of the Allied command upon which the battle wrote so severe a comment. In the result, however, while the Germans suffered a disastrous battering, all that the Allies lost was six weeks and that, perhaps, was counter-balanced by a necessary and salutary lesson.

Meanwhile Russia had been transforming the outlook on her front. Her role was to act as the hammer and she had persisted in demanding that the western Allies should provide a suitable anvil. Pausing only to see that it was in position in the west, she opened her summer campaign on June 10th not indeed by attacking as was expected in Rumania, not even where the next most probable alternative lay—the central front that looked west into the heart of Germany. She struck instead at Finland, to clear her northern flank and free her Baltic fleet. And it was a very different army that delivered the blow from the over-confident, inefficient force that marched into trouble in November 1939.

Russia was still engaging nearly two-thirds of the German field forces. The two hundred German divisions which were on the Russian front were not individually as strong as those, slightly fewer than one hundred, held down in the west and in Italy; nor were the three hundred Russian divisions as numerically superior to them as was thought at the time. They were still increasing their strength; and during this period it was about twice that of the Germans they were engaging. But with such a superiority over so extensive a front, with good lateral communications and mobility—mainly supplied by the Allies—it was not difficult to concentrate a much greater superiority—three to one or more—against sectors selected for attack. In artillery, and material generally, also with the assistance rendered at the cost of almost indescribable perils by the Allies, they were very much superior to the Germans.

Indeed it was Italy that was treated as the Cinderella of the war. General Alexander had to surrender three first-rate American divisions, and seven French divisions for the ser-

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vice of 'Dragoon'. He pursued the Germans north of Rome; but Kesselring was able to rally his forces before the valuable American and French divisions were withdrawn. They were replaced in time by divisions of many nations; but Alexander had not the strength necessary to cut off the troops in the pocket south-east of Perugia, though by the end of June he had taken 32,000 prisoners. He was able to take Siena a month after the fall of Rome, nearly 120 miles to the south; but the next thirty miles to Florence could not be covered in less than seven weeks. Kesselring was able to hold his weakened opponent to this pedestrian pace. At the end of August Alexander was ready to attack the eastern end of the Gothic line.

But, from the first attack by Canadians of the 8th Army, now commanded by Sir Oliver Leese, on August 26th, it was almost a month before Rimini was taken by Greek troops; and, though with the thrust transferred to the north of Florence on the 5th Army front, the Gothic line was pierced at both ends, German counter-attacks sealed off the breaches. The fighting on this position was, as *The Times* reported, 'some of the bloodiest in the history of the British Army'. Generals Autumn and Winter then intervened; and all that could be achieved was the capture of the south bank of the Senio river in early January and the pinning down of the 10th and 14th German Armies. There were some abortive peace feelers by the Chief S.S. officer in Italy, General Karl Wolff in mid-February; but Italy remained starved of opportunities for anything but battering-ram tactics until mid-April.

In Russia the mere extent of the front provided opportunities by which the Russians were not slow to profit. It was on June 10th that General Govorov's Leningrad Army Group struck across the Karelian isthmus, after many abortive attempts to prevail upon Finland to abandon Germany. The United States and Britain urged Finland to accept the moderate terms Russia was prepared to offer. But the negotiations, begun in Stockholm, were continued during the spring in Moscow without result. The Russian attack fol-

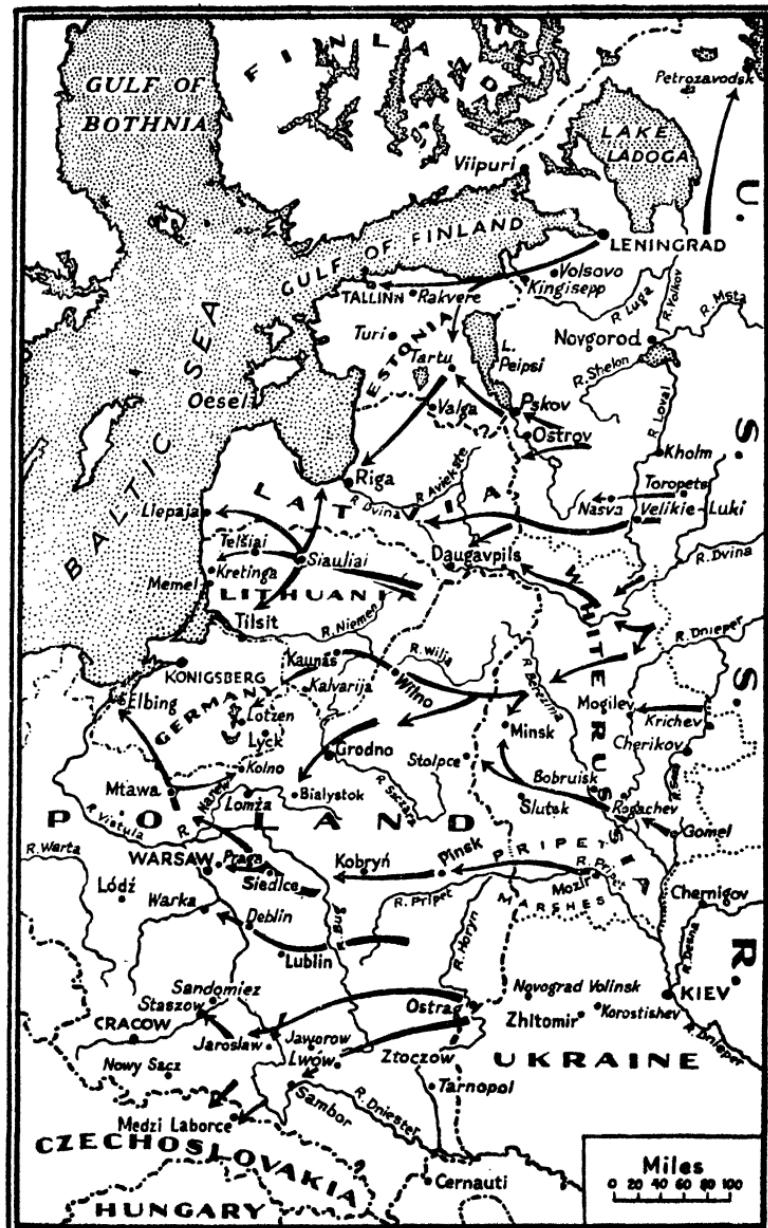
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lowed a complete breakdown; and from the first the result was certain.

Finland had built a new Mannerheim line at a greater distance from Viipuri, and had established advanced positions which were a direct threat to the Russian northern flank. But when the fighting began, in spite of the heroic Finnish resistance, Russian infantry and tanks broke through the defences near the coast in five days, and in a week had captured positions in the centre of the Mannerheim line. After seizing Koivisto, at the coastal end of the line, the Russians stormed Viipuri, and opened the way to Helsinki. General Meretskov was, meanwhile, engaged in clearing the corridor north of Lake Ladoga; and later on he succeeded in freeing the Murmansk railway. Finland soon afterwards made attempts to break free from the war, though an armistice was not signed until September.

Long before that, however, the main Russian offensive had swept up to the Vistula. It opened on the third anniversary of the invasion of Russia and before long twelve groups ('fronts', the Russians called them) of Russian armies were noted, though their designation was no necessary indication of the order in which they were deployed along the front. Two of these groups, the Leningrad Group of Marshal Govorov and the Karelian Group of General Meretskov have already been seen in action; and before the end of the year, the others will be noted as they take their cue and move across the stage.

Field-Marshal von Busch was in charge of the central front and General Lindemann of the northern sector, when General Bagramyan's 1st Baltic Group struck north-west of Vitebsk, and Chernyakhovsky's 3rd White Russian Group attacked south of it. By this time the Frederician strategy of the preceding year had become a counsel of perfection. Hitler's plan was to hold the Russian front by a series of echeloned defences, the most easterly of which were centred in the 'hedge-hogs', Vitebsk, Orsha, Mogilev and Zhlobin—the 'Fatherland Line'. The 'Tiger Line' lay about Polotsk, and the 'Panther Line' south of Pskov. The plan would have been



15. The Advance to the Vistula and the
East Prussian Campaign

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less of a gamble if there had been mobile forces sufficient to defeat any force that should succeed in breaking through. Vitebsk and Zhlobin were already in the battle front, whereas Mogilev was some miles to the west of the Russian forces. Vitebsk, situated astride the western Dvina, and Orsha on the Dnieper, at a junction of the Warsaw-Moscow railway, lay like guardians of the historic route to Moscow. The Russians planned now to advance in the opposite direction; and their first objectives were Vitebsk and the Orsha-Zhlobin-Minsk triangle.

In two days Bagramyan broke through the deep defences north of Vitebsk while Chernyakhovsky tore a gap in the defences south-east of it. All of the Russian armies were using heavy concentrations of artillery and, with the close support of Stormoviks, they advanced some miles to the west. The Dvina was crossed north of Vitebsk and the two generals closed in upon the city. A considerable stretch of the front was already in the throes of dissolution when General Zakharov's 2nd White Russian Group attacked Mogilev and Rokossovsky's 1st White Russian Group advanced against Zhlobin and Bobruisk, on the Beresina. The four groups of armies were now fighting on a front of some 200 miles; and the 'Fatherland Line' swiftly collapsed under their impetuous attack. Vitebsk was surrounded and entered from the east on June 26th and 10,000 prisoners were taken. Orsha fell the following day; and Rokossovsky, who had sent a column to Osipovichi, about half-way to Minsk, cut off a number of divisions near Bobruisk. Mogilev was captured on the 28th by Zakharov who had forced the Dnieper on a 70-mile front; Zhlobin had been stormed on the 26th in a single day by Rokossovsky who three days later captured Bobruisk with 18,000 prisoners. The Russians then advanced from north and south upon Minsk. Rokossovsky cut it off from the west with cavalry, mechanized infantry and tanks while Chernyakhovsky's tanks advanced upon it from the north. The Germans wisely moved out; and on June 30th the Russians were once again in possession of the most important base of White Russia. Rokossovsky was at once made a Marshal.

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This deep advance to the west enabled Bagramyan to capture Polotsk the following day. Chernyakovsky moved north on Vilna, and General Yeremenko's 2nd Baltic Group advanced against the 'Panther Line' protecting the Latvian frontier while Rokossovsky moved west upon the junction of Baranovichi. General Maslennikov's 3rd Baltic Group moved up on Yeremenko's right flank, and later on Govorov came down on Maslennikov's right. Seven great army groups were then in motion; and soon, from as far north as Narva to the Carpathians, spectacular changes began to appear on the war map. Ostrov was captured, and Pskov two days later; and the Russian column which advanced into Estonia upon Tartu and the Tartu-Riga road found another column swinging down through Narva to converge with it. Yeremenko had struck westwards into Latvia, south of Ostrov, and captured Dvinsk. Shavli fell; and a tank column broke through to Mitau (Jelgava) on the Baltic coast on July 31st, and the following day entered Tukum thereby cutting Lindemann's last railway communications with Germany.

Lindemann disappeared from the scene and his successor, General Schörner, delivered a sharp counter-attack to relieve the pressure. He succeeded in reopening the Tukum line of escape and it was soon put into use to evacuate Estonia and Latvia; Shavli and Mitau were left in Russian hands. Chernyakovsky had, meanwhile, stormed Vilna in a five days' battle, advanced through Grodno and crossed the Niemen towards East Prussia. Bialystok had already fallen; but it was nearly a fortnight after Kovno and Mariampole, thirty miles from the northern frontier of East Prussia, had been entered that Osowiec, the frontier fortress north-west of Bialystok, was captured on August 14th.

All these movements, however, were inter-related and mutually supported each other; and they in their turn covered the flank of advance in the south which created even greater surprise and hope. One of the left columns of Rokossovsky had captured the important junction of Kovel and that significant success was the prelude to the most important advances during the summer; but the advance from Kovel

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was itself the sequel to an offensive farther south. This advance was made by a mechanized column which forced its way across the Bug to enter Lublin. A few days later, after cutting the Brest-Litovsk-Warsaw railway, the tanks and infantry stormed Deblin (Ivangorod). The column had swept up to the Vistula with such speed that among its prisoners was the German general commanding Lublin. Another of Rokossovsky's columns, farther south, was engaged in a battle at Siedlce, sixty miles west of Brest-Litovsk; and the next day, July 28th, encircling the German divisions between the two places, he stormed the fortress of Brest. On July 30th he crossed the Vistula north of Deblin; and on the last day of the month he stormed Siedlce, Minsk-Mazovestky, and Lukov, and was at the gates of Warsaw. Here on the central front he had cut across the main defences of the approach to the Vistula in the best blitzkrieg style.

The immediate sequel, however, forms one of the most heartrending episodes of the war. Such sweeping victories as these, and particularly this astonishing advance to the suburb of Warsaw, Praga, inevitably stimulated hopes in the Poles that their deliverance from horrors that make ill reading was at last at hand. They were encouraged to do so by the summons to rise issued by the Polish National Committee of Liberation from Lublin and Moscow. It is impossible to think this was without the approval, if not with the active encouragement, of Soviet Russia.

Indeed, some months before, the Moscow radio had stated that a Soviet had been set up in Warsaw; and by this must be interpreted the fact that on July 23rd the 'Union of Polish Patriots' announced from Moscow that the 'Polish National Council' had proclaimed the establishment of a Polish 'Committee of National Liberation' at Chelm, on the orders issued from Warsaw, on July 21st. Four days later the Russian Government, announcing that Polish troops had entered Polish territory, stated that it was intended to conclude an agreement with the Polish Committee of National Liberation as to relations with the Soviet Command and Polish administration. As this Committee was a Communist-domi-

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nated body, Russia's intentions were clear. Its president, it is of interest to note, is the present President of Poland. The Polish Government in London had announced, *three months before*, that the Polish underground forces and administration had been ordered to co-operate with the Russian armies. They had been of assistance in the field already.

Marshal Stalin was laying the foundation of his own government for Poland; and under such circumstances it was inevitable that relations between the Polish Government and Russia should steadily deteriorate. The Third Moscow Conference in October did little, if anything, to improve them.

This was the background against which the heroic struggle in Warsaw took place. General 'Bor' Komorowski directed the rising; and in the first few days the Underground army achieved some success. But Rokossovsky had out-marched his strength; and Model seized the chance of his dispersion to counter-attack with 8 divisions, 5 of them Panzer units. He achieved sufficient success to hold the Russians off Warsaw and its eastern suburb, Praga, for vital weeks during which the Germans turned to the methodical destruction of the Poles. As early as August 8th General Komorowski was appealing for arms and ammunition. Russia refused to allocate airfields to the supply by American air squadrons; and such assistance as was given came from R.A.F. and S.A.A.F. planes flying from Italy, many manned by Polish pilots. There were numerous casualties; and the assistance by such means could not be adequate to the need.

The battle went on; the Germans, killing military and civilian prisoners and taking so many women and children to concentration camps, that the British and United States Governments, at the end of August, had to warn them that retribution would fall upon them if they did not recognize the belligerent rights of the Polish Army. On September 15th Rokossovsky entered Praga; and two nights earlier, for the first time, the Russians began to drop supplies and arms in Warsaw. But it was then too late. The German tanks had cut the Poles into small parties who had sustained continuous

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bombardment from the air and attack by artillery and mine-throwers. Russians who filtered into the city found that the people were now beyond help. And, on October 2nd, the Poles fired their last shots. The Lublin National Committee added the last touch of cynicism to their behaviour by charging General Komorowski with being absent from Warsaw during the sixty-three days' battle, and described the heroic episode as 'a criminal rising'. Its action may have served the Russian purpose which was, presumably, to reduce to ignominy the Polish Government and the forces which obeyed their orders; and unhappily the Western Allies failed to read the moral.

A month earlier, when the Germans were reeling back to the German frontiers in the west, Zakharov and Rokossovsky advanced once again, the latter against Praga and the former against the fortress line south-east of East Prussia. His most significant achievement was the capture of the fortress of Lomza on September 12th. But the main Polish front had already sunk into a long rest; and Zakharov's advance was related to the resumed Baltic campaign which opened as Rokossovsky was entering Praga. Govorov and Maslennikov had, as we have seen, sent converging columns into Estonia. The former, by the first weeks of October, had reduced the islands, Moon, Dago and Oesel, lying off the coast of Estonia, while Maslennikov and Yeremenko converged on the important port of Riga which was captured on October 13th.

Schörner's forces were thus cut off from the north; and Bagramyan, with his left supporting Yeremenko, began to isolate him from the south, first at Libau and later at Palanga, a few miles north of Memel. Schörner, part of whose forces had escaped to East Prussia, then went to ground in Courland, a sort of Lithuanian Bataan, with some twenty weak divisions. Many of these troops were later evacuated by sea and appeared in the last phase of the war in north-eastern Pomerania.

Bagramyan, turning south towards Tilsit, began to co-operate with Chernyakovsky's advance up the Niemen on the same city. In early October the latter moved against the In-

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sterburg Gap. He succeeded in entering East Prussia; and, in spite of fierce resistance, on the deeply echeloned defences, he contrived to reach the Angerap river, some thirty-five miles inside the province. That was the high-water mark of the offensive. Bagramyan's advance had compelled a withdrawal about Tilsit, and Rokossovsky and Zakharov were at the Narev defences; but the advance on the Angerap sector had been made against repeated counter-attacks, and on October 27th the German tanks broke through to the Russian artillery. On the last day of the month, the Germans proclaimed that they had won the fortnight's battle. At least they had convinced the Russian Command that only a full-scale converging attack would reduce East Prussia; and for that, at the moment, they were not prepared.

Two other offensives mark this phase of the war on the Russian front. One of them had already settled down to the consolidation of its important gains. The other was still developing; and it was pursued with little intermission to the end of the war.

When Rokossovsky's southern column had begun its astonishing advance west of Kovel to the Vistula, its cue was the crumbling of the resistance on its left flank. Marshal Koniev, on July 16th, had opened an offensive with the immediate object of cutting out the obstinate knot of Lvov, a junction of such importance that it immensely increased the strength of the defence and, conversely, the opportunities for exploitation of capture. In three days he had torn a wide gap in the defences; and before Rokossovsky's column set out for the Vistula, Kamionka, Brody (north-east) and Zloczow (due east) had been overrun. Two days later Rava Ruska, some miles to the north-west, followed; and on this day Koniev launched another column, some miles to the north, which captured Vladimir Volynsk and advanced swiftly to the west. His troops were still engaged with a body of Germans surrounded about Brody; but one column was able to cut Lvov off from the west and the following day that important junction, now completely surrounded, at length succumbed. His left columns were pressing towards the Carpathian foot-

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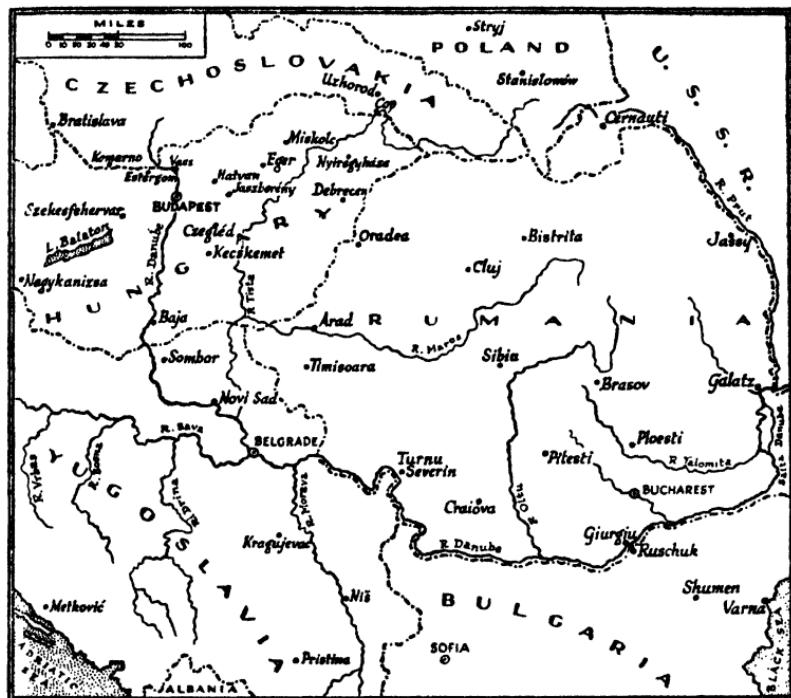
hills; and in a few days, they had achieved contact with General Petrov's 4th Ukrainian Group.

Meanwhile his western advance continued. He reached the San; and, after capturing Jaroslav and crossing the river in several places, the Germans were compelled to abandon it. He moved westward towards the Vistula and crossed the river south of Sandomierz on August 3rd. This was an event of such importance that the Germans attempted to prevent his establishing a bridgehead. But, by August 18th, he had captured Sandomierz and swiftly linked his positions there with those established in the first crossings at Baranov. The bridgehead was then some seventy miles in extent and nearly twenty miles deep; and it was maintained to form the spring-board for the winter advance. Petrov, whose advance had been facilitated by Koniev's capture of Stanislavov, had by this time captured Styry and the Carpathian oilfield area about Drohobycz and Borislav; and his left columns were already beginning to make their way towards eastern Slovakia.

Petrov's group, indeed, formed the only link between the north of the Carpathians and the tactically distinct theatre of Rumania and the Balkans where Generals Malinovsky and Tolbukhin had already begun their Danubian campaign which was to continue until the end of the war. The offensive opened on August 20th, and, from the nature of the positions on which the fighting of the preceding winter had come to rest, the two generals were committed to a converging attack upon the enemy armies. These armies, the 8th and 6th, though nominally of about twenty-five divisions, and commanding the co-operation of about two-thirds that number of Rumanian divisions, were only the skeletons of the German armies that had taken the field three years before. They stood on strong offensive positions which confronted the Russians in an obtuse angle; but Malinovsky, striking from the north and Tolbukhin from the south-east, swiftly broke through, and the lines of their converging advance swept past some twelve divisions about Kishinev.

In three days fighting, Malinovsky captured Jassy; and on August 23rd, the King of Rumania arrested Marshal An-

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16. The Balkan and Hungarian Battlefields

tonescu, ordered an immediate cessation of hostilities, accepted the armistice terms and formed a new Government under General Senatescu. Two days later the Germans bombed Bukarest; and Rumania declared war on Germany and sent her armies into Transylvania. That province had been promised her in return for her co-operation with the Russians against Germany. It was on this same day that Paris was rejoicing over its liberation.

The Russian armies continued their advance. Tolbukhin captured Ismail and on August 27th, Galatz. But, the day before, Bulgaria had declared that she had withdrawn from the war and that she would disarm the German troops in the country who had begun their withdrawal from Greece. Russia refused to accept Bulgaria's neutrality and on September 5th declared war upon her. This brought her to heel.

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The same day she declared war on Germany and the Russians entered Bulgaria unopposed. They had already entered Bukarest by way of Buzaeu and Ploesti; and gradually they secured complete control of the two countries. Germany lost her main source of natural oil and more of the precious wheat lands. For a month's campaign with only a week of hard fighting, these were a striking reward.

At this point Malinovsky's Group were in contact with Petrov's in the distant north-east and, after clearing Transylvania his course was set for Hungary in the west and the borders of Yugoslavia in the south-west, towards which country Tolbukhin was sweeping. Both commanders had been made Marshals; and their victorious march was only beginning.

In the north, Malinovsky's main enemy was the mountainous country; and at the beginning Petrov could not co-operate with him directly. Moreover, until September 3rd, the twelve divisions of the 6th Army cut off in the Kishinev area had not been compelled to surrender. By that time, however, 106,000 prisoners had been taken; and, with that comfortable success as a basis, he turned north and west. Two columns moved north on Cluj, the capital of Transylvania, while an armoured column was sent by way of Deva to Arad which it occupied on September 22nd. Farther south he was in possession of Temesvar (Timisoara); and his left had been at Turnu Severin for nearly a fortnight. In that area Tolbukhin, after linking up with Tito's partisans, made contact with him at the beginning of October. Tolbukhin thence moved swiftly up the Morava on Belgrade which Malinovsky threatened from the north-east. By the 20th, in four days' fighting, he had liberated the Jugoslav capital.

By this time Malinovsky had crossed the Hungarian frontier and the river Theiss (Tisza), had occupied Cluj, captured the junction of Oradea on the line of retreat from Cluj, and from Szeged had occupied Baja and Sombor, reaching the north-south stretch of the Danube. Petrov had entered Czechoslovakia and was moving on the junction Cop to co-operate with his columns on the right. He entered the junc-

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tion on the 28th; and, though violently ejected, he caused a timely diversion. For Malinovsky's central columns had advanced through Kecskemet to Czegled, on the railway some forty miles south-west of Budapest. He cleared the threat to his advance by crossing the upper Theiss, storming Jaszereny on the 15th and, breaking through the Gyongyos-Eger defences by the 25th, surrounded Miskolc. He was unable to capture it and link up with Petrov, who had already invested Kosice, until December 3rd.

Meanwhile the shape of things to come had already cast an ominous shadow over these stirring events. The two Russian Marshals brought in their train the Russian political blueprint. Governments emerged or collapsed with disconcerting swiftness as the 'liberating' armies moved forward. Rumania and Bulgaria had already changed theirs. A new Greek Government was emerging from a painful delivery. The Yugoslav Government was reluctantly, but surely, being edged off the stage into the wings by Tito. The Hungarian Regent asked for an Armistice on October 15th, disappeared under Hitler's wand almost immediately, and the Arrow Cross leader, Szalasy, reigned in his stead. But two months later a Provisional Government was set up in Russian-liberated territory. It was reported that the October Moscow Conference had made progress with the solution of the Polish problem; on January 5th the solution appeared; the United States and the United Kingdom recognized the Polish Government in London, Russia recognized that of Lublin as the Provisional Government.

Only in Greece did the Western Allies show any sense of what was at issue. Land Forces Adriatic, which, with the aid of the Navy, R.A.F. and Yugoslav partisans had been operating in Albania since the end of May, began to strike farther south. They landed at Patras on October 4th and pushed on to Corinth. The Germans were swiftly cutting their losses and General Scobie, accepted by the Greeks as Commander-in-Chief for the liberation of their country, occupied Athens on October 14th; and the long struggle for the soul of Greece began.

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Meanwhile the Budapest campaign was entering upon its final phase with the two Russian Marshals now closely co-operating. Malinovsky lay at this time close to Pest and had begun to clear the thirty-mile long island Csepel, which lies in the Danube and pushes its tip into the city. Tolbukhin on November 29th crossed the Drava from the south to Lake Balaton and Lake Valencze which lies between Lake Balaton and Buda, twenty miles to the north-east and, on the night of December 6th, Malinovsky crossed the Danube from Lake Valencze to join hands with him. Meanwhile, he was striking east and north-east; and he had reached the Danube at Vacs, on its northern elbow, on December 9th, and pressed westward across the Ipel. In the hilly country he fought a series of heavy battles on both sides of the Czechoslovak frontier.

Tolbukhin struck up towards the east-west stretch of the Danube; and, on December 20th, captured Szekesfehervar and Bicske and cut the main line of retreat of the forces defending the capital. Six days later he entered Esztergom, on the southern bank of the Danube. Malinovsky crossed the river from the north and the investment of the city was complete. Snow had fallen. A pall of smoke covered the city as the Russian bombardment ploughed a way through the street defences.

The Germans had determined to attempt the relief of Buda, and, hoping to block Malinovsky's advance westward at the river Hron, on January 2nd counter-attacked strongly south of the Danube. The battle lasted for some weeks; and did not end with the fall of the capital. The counter-attack went through several phases and, at first, achieved a considerable measure of success. Esztergom was recovered; and the German tanks drove the Russians back to within twenty miles of the ascending arm of the Danube. But Bicske was firmly held; and Malinovsky broke through the Hron defences and advanced to within two miles of Komarno. At the end of the first week, as one of the German military correspondents wrote, there were 'two armies storming past each other separated only by the Danube'. The Russians did not relax their grip on Buda and grimly reduced the city block

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by block. 'Frau Ju', the Junkers which had tided many hard-pressed garrisons over a crisis, was brought into service again. Here, the assistance was only a pill for an earthquake. Pest and 59,000 prisoners were captured on the 18th; and Buda was gradually reduced. On the last two days of the seven weeks' siege, 30,000 prisoners were taken. On February 13th all was over; and it seemed that the way to Vienna was already open.

The Far East campaign had also seen strong bastions fall. In Burma the Japanese resistance in retreat held up the pursuit of the 14th Army. The air transport squadrons had made it possible for General Slim to break the enemy assault; but the tremendous strain had to be relaxed when the monsoon broke; and this made the exploitation less swift, though not less effective. But in the monsoon season, from May to October, the situation in North Burma was nevertheless cleared up. While the Chinese and United States troops were pressing down the Hukawng Valley on Mogaung, which the Chindits stormed in the last week of June, the 14th Army, after its victory in the Imphal Plain, was clearing the Kohima-Imphal road, and the Ukhru area. Myitkyina fell to the U.S. Marauders and the Chinese on August 4th, the day before the 14th Army captured Tamu; and a fortnight later the Japanese were no longer on Indian soil.

The Chinese-American next objective was Bhamo; and the advance was so effectively resisted that it was not until the end of the year that, after a month's siege, it was at last occupied. By that time the 14th Army had cut the Tiddim road and captured Tiddim and Kalewa on the Chindwin; and British troops were in Indaw, on the Mandalay-Myitkyina railway, and Katha, on the upper Irrawaddy. At the end of the year the Allied troops had made great progress with the recovered initiative. British troops were approaching Yeu and Schwebo in upper Burma and about to enter Akyab in Arakan. The season and the jungle, and an enemy better fitted to endure the former and inured to the latter, had merely slowed down the reoccupation of northern Burma.

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But during this process one of the most picturesque figures of the Burma scene made his troubled exit. General Stilwell, 'Vinegar Joe', true to his nickname to the end, was recalled on the insistence of Chiang Kai-Shek. He did not leave until the plans of General Chennault, which had been given priority over his own, had begun to collapse. The Japanese were already overrunning the airfields in China without which Chennault's aircraft could not function. Stilwell, however, had never realized that the unfamiliar, and possibly unpalatable, needs and deserves the commendation of common tact and politeness; and in the end he and Chiang had come to hate¹ each other. Mr. Stimson and General Marshall believed in Stilwell, as much as they misinterpreted and blamed the British in Burma. With merely a trace of Eisenhower's self-restraint and self-effacement, he might have saved China. The one monument to his memory was the Ledo Road which he had forced to completion.

He was to appear, however, as commander of MacArthur's 10th Army, after the fall of Okinawa; but that was some little distance ahead. The United States and Australian troops were engaged in overcoming the centres of resistance in and about New Guinea during June. Indeed the Australians were in the end left the tactical role of destroying the bodies of Japanese still left at large in New Guinea, New Britain and Bougainville while the Americans moved in towards the Japanese homeland.

But before the end of the year they had already made a powerful leap forward in that direction. The main problem they had to surmount was the insulating spaces of the sea; but, as the *Report of the United States Bomber Survey* said, 'it proved impossible to agree on an overall command for the Pacific as a whole', and co-ordination between MacArthur and Nimitz had to be effected by the joint Chiefs of Staff. As a consequence, the spectacle of two combined campaigns of all arms, which we have already noted in action, became more evident in the present phase of the war.

¹ *On Active Service in Peace and War* by Henry L. Stimson and McGeorge Bundy, p. 303.

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It was in the second week of June that the fast carrier Task Force appeared in the Marianas and for several days raided the airfields, harbours and ground defences of Guam, Tinian and Saipan. The island of Saipan lies only about 1,500 miles south of Tokyo; and when Admiral Spruance's 5th Fleet on June 15th opened its bombardment, considerable damage had already been done. The 2nd and 4th Marine divisions and the 27th infantry divisions were, therefore, able to make good their landing swiftly. On this same day, in order to distract the attention of the Japanese, the first super-fortress raid was made from China on the industrial centre of Yawatta, on Kyushu.

A Japanese attempt to strike back at the 5th Fleet and crush the invasion with hundreds of aircraft failed completely. Nearly four hundred Japanese aircraft were shot down and the attack developed into the battle of the Philippine Sea. The Task Force turned on the Japanese fleet which had launched the air attack, sank one carrier, damaged a battleship, two cruisers, three carriers and a destroyer and shot down numbers of aircraft. In the bad weather and the darkness, a quarter of the American aircraft failed to return; but fleet interference with the invasion of the Marianas was not attempted again, and task forces on July 3rd raided Iwojima in the Volcano Islands and the Bonins. Three Japanese destroyers and several cargo ships were sunk; and a number of others were destroyed the following day.

But the reduction of the island went steadily ahead. Already the Aslito airfield had been captured; and in a few days bombers were operating from it as far north as Tokyo and as far south-east as Mindanao. The Japanese forces were cut in two and the fierce struggle continued until July 10th when organized resistance ceased, though a few snipers continued to give trouble until a month before the final surrender. The Japanese lost, it was estimated, 25,000 killed and the Americans had 2,359 killed in action, 11,481 wounded and 1,213 missing.

But meanwhile they had turned their attention to Guam and Tinian. The former was shelled by Allied cruisers on

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July 8th; bombarded once more by United States warships on the 17th and invaded on the 20th. Guam had, of course, flown the United States flag before the Japanese forced America into the war; and when the 3rd Marine division and the 77th infantry division landed they were undertaking a work of redemption. As in Saipan the resistance was stubborn and, although the airfield and naval base had been captured early and the United States flag flown once more, it was three weeks before organized resistance was over. By that time the Japanese had lost 17,000 killed and 500 prisoners, while the assaulting troops had 1,214 killed, 5,704 wounded and 329 missing.

During this short but bloody campaign, after a heavy bombardment, the Americans landed on the island of Tinian, which is separated by only two and a half miles from Guam. The two Marine divisions which had conquered Saipan quickly overcame the resistance there. By August 2nd the occupation was complete. With the clearing of Guam the conquest of the Marianas had been achieved. As the new Secretary of the Navy, Forrestal, said they could 'provide the key which will unlock the door to Japan, the Philippines and the coast of China'.

Further evidence of the shift in the balance of sea power which these events indicated was provided about this time by the bombardment of Sabang, in Sumatra, by Allied battleships, cruisers and destroyers of the Eastern Fleet. With the assistance of carrier-aircraft the harbour installations were almost completely destroyed; and that further plans were afoot was shown by Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser taking over the command from Sir James Somerville. President Roosevelt, between these two events, had visited Honolulu to preside at a discussion between General MacArthur and Admiral Nimitz of the plans for the future development of the war in the Pacific. That was a fortnight before the organized resistance on Guam had ceased; and, before the next invasions began, the Admiral's ships ranged over the Pacific from the Volcano and Bonin Islands to Wake Island and the Carolines and the Palau Islands. They seriously damaged a convoy off

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the Bonin and Volcano islands, which were visited several times, and almost destroyed another off Mindanao in the Philippines.

The key to this apparently indiscriminate raiding was provided by the invasion of Morotai on September 15th; and the simultaneous landing, 500 miles to the north, of the 1st Marine division, on Peleliu, in the Palau group by Admiral Halsey's 3rd Fleet. Morotai, the northern-most of the Halmahera group, lies only 300 miles from Mindanao, and only 500 miles from Leyte, in the Philippines. MacArthur rightly regarded the Halmahera-Philippine line as the main enemy 'cover for his conquered empire in the south-west Pacific', south of China. With the invasion of Morotai, he began the reduction of that line.

He had selected his objective with some care. The main island of the Halmahera group had a garrison of some 30,000 men and the Japanese expected the blow to fall there. In choosing Morotai he selected an island with only some 500 men as garrison. It was captured with only five casualties; and the main island, with its garrison, was by-passed and neutralized.

The 1st Marine division fared very differently on Peleliu. The airfield was captured the day after the landing when, indeed, the 81st infantry division invaded Anguar, which lies a few miles to the south. But on Peleliu the Marines encountered some of the fiercest fighting even that hard-bitten unit, which had made the first landing at Guadalcanal, had experienced. But organized resistance did not last long in either island. In Anguar it was over in three days. Although some 1,200 Japanese were killed the American loss was almost equally heavy: 1,022 killed. During the rest of the month, the other islands in the Palau group were occupied. The Americans had now an organized series of bases from the Halmaheras to the Marianas and, particularly towards the end of the month, they began to bomb from carriers not only the area of Manila, but also the Visayas, the central group of the Philippines, which includes the island of Leyte.

This island had become MacArthur's next objective, the

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first step to make good his pledge to return to the Philippines. One of Halsey's probing operations had included air attacks on Mindanao on September 9th and 10th; and as a consequence he made the suggestion that the intermediate landings, which included one on Mindanao, should be omitted and that Leyte should be attacked at once. MacArthur agreed to advance his invasion from December 20th to October 20th. The air attacks fell upon Marcus Island and the most southerly of the Japanese islands in October; and land-based aircraft visited Mindanao. On October 16th, Admiral Nimitz, summing up the results of this blizzard, said that in the preceding ten days the Japanese had lost an average of 10 ships daily and that, since October 9th, at least 73 ships and 670 aircraft had been destroyed. And then, on the morning of October 20th, the warships opened a heavy bombardment of the shores of Leyte Island and landings began on the east coast.

It was the typhoon season; but that did not prevent MacArthur, always something of a showman, from dramatizing the occasion. He reached Tacloban in three days and, raising once again the United States flag, he announced through the microphone: 'People of the Philippines, I have returned.' The guerrillas there and throughout the Philippines very soon became more aggressive, and their assistance proved of great value. But for the moment the ground campaign was completely overshadowed by the first and last Japanese challenge to a fleet action. If the Japanese were not to reconcile themselves to defeat, the fleet must strike now, for the Americans threatened to cut their lifeline. In the south lay their oil, in the north their ammunition. Installed in the Visayas the Americans would give them the choice of oil without ammunition or ammunition without oil; and neither, alone, was sufficient to the existence of an operational fleet. The United States Navy had long wished for a fleet action; the Japanese Admiral Soemu Toyada now thought he had an opportunity of destroying the United States Fleet and the invasion at a stroke. He had to face the 7th Fleet under Admiral Kinkaid, powerfully reinforced for the invasion, and the

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3rd Fleet under Admiral Halsey, providing cover and support.

The plan was to make use of the islands to cover his approach in three columns, the southern of 2 battleships, 4 cruisers and 8 destroyers; the central of 5 battleships, 12 cruisers and 15 destroyers, led by Admiral Kurita, and the northern of 2 battleships, 4 carriers, 3 cruisers and 10 destroyers. The southern column was to approach through Surigao Strait towards the south of Leyte Gulf, while the central column threaded the San Bernardino Strait and turned south past the east coast of Samar towards the north of Leyte Gulf. The northern column was to steam round Cape Engano, the northern point of Luzon, and draw off Halsey's 3rd Fleet while the naval and ground forces were being destroyed in Leyte Gulf.

On the 24th the central column was identified far to the west of Samar and aircraft from Halsey's carriers attacked. They sank at least one ship; but the column was lost for some time and the losses were thought to have made it turn away. It was then that Halsey, hearing of the northern column, in the light of his information about the central column, turned north to attack the column off Cape Engano. This was to conform to the Japanese desires; but he arrived with unexpected promptitude and at first light on the following morning his aircraft took off to attack. He began to receive appeals for help from Admiral Kinkaid; and at just before noon, leaving two Task Groups to deal with the northern column, he turned south with a third Task Group including his fast modern battleships.

In the south the battle was won and lost and won again before he could arrive on the scene. Kinkaid, thinking the San Bernardino Strait still blocked, had sent Rear-Admiral Jesse B. Oldendorf to block the Surigao Strait with 6 battleships, *revenants* from Pearl Harbour, 8 cruisers, 26 destroyers and 39 motor torpedo-boats (P.T.'s). The P.T.'s were sent forward with destroyers and did considerable damage. They also caused the Japanese to use their searchlights and star-shells, thus revealing their position. Oldendorf, relying on

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radar, at 3 o'clock in the morning, opened fire with his 16-inch guns and in about half an hour destroyed the southern column. The battle of Surigao Strait was a complete victory. Kinkaid, however, had left himself only with carriers and escorts, and Rear-Admiral Sprague suddenly found the central column descending upon him. The escorts and destroyers attacked, and the carriers sent their aircraft against the enemy; but, though they sank 2 cruisers and 2 destroyers, before 10 o'clock the Japanese battleships were pouring their 16-inch and 18-inch shells into Sprague's ships from 12,000 yards range. The Japanese land-based aircraft joined in the attack; and before long 2 escort carriers, 2 destroyers and a destroyer escort were sunk. Another destroyer and 7 escort carriers were badly damaged. Oldendorf, appealed to, could not respond in time; and disaster, complete and overwhelming, was imminent when the Japanese turned back at high speed through San Bernardino Strait.

Kurita seems to have been afflicted with nerves throughout the battle. When the victory was his for the grasping, he wasted precious time in concentrating the force he had allowed to become dispersed. Then an American order suggesting the immediate arrival of the 3rd Fleet made him anxious about his line of retreat. He turned away to meet his new enemy and assure his escape; and so lost the chance of the greatest naval victory of the war, the last chance of any naval success in the war.

The Americans, however, called up all the air support they could command to make an end of the Japanese Fleet. The battle for Leyte Gulf was turned into an overwhelming victory. For a loss of 1 carrier and 2 destroyers, 2 escort carriers and a destroyer escort, the Americans sank 4 carriers, 3 battleships, 10 cruisers (6 heavy), and 9 destroyers, and seriously damaged 31 other ships, including 6 battleships. Halsey's decision led to a local crisis, Kurita's lost the battle and precipitated a strategic crisis.

The Leyte campaign was hard fought and long. The Americans had quickly established themselves about the Gulf; but in the north and west the resistance was stubborn,

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and reinforcements were brought from Luzon. The Limon defences were penetrated to the Leyte river; but not until the 77th division were landed south of Ormoc, on December 7th, was the northern resistance seriously threatened. Ormoc and Leyte fell on the 10th; and on the 26th Palompon, on the west coast, was captured. After that organized fighting on Leyte and Samar gradually ceased.

And, even before, on December 15th, the Americans had landed on Mindoro about 150 miles from Manila. By the end of the year the island was cleared; and MacArthur was ready for the return to Luzon.

The phase which ended before the Final Assault, was marked by an increasing number of conferences. While the Allies were fighting for their lives, less talk was needed; when they were merely fighting for what alone makes life worth living, the conferences steadily multiplied as politics coloured the war more and more. And it must strike the onlooker now, though it seems to have escaped the notice of the statesmen at the time, that the conferences inspired by constructive ideas were launched by the Western Allies. Russia was thinking, in a purely self-regarding way, of power politics. But it was not Russia who was responsible for the Veto proposal, as such. This was agreed upon by Britain and America prior to the Dumbarton Oaks Conference in July. At Yalta Russia agreed that the Veto should not extend to the *discussion* of a Great Power's being involved in a dispute. But she pressed for votes in the Assembly for the Ukraine and White Russia. Mr. Roosevelt at length agreed that the United States would support the claim for the additional votes and Stalin pledged support if two further votes were asked for the United States. On the question of reparations Mr. Roosevelt only agreed that the Russian claim for 50 per cent of the total of 20 billion dollars should be accepted as a basis for discussion.

Stalin¹ showed more resistance to the granting of a place on the Control Commission to France; and at first the United States supported him, though Mr. Hopkins was in favour of

¹ *The White House Papers of Harry L. Hopkins*, p. 849.

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the British contention, that France should have a zone and a place on the Control Commission. Mr. Roosevelt changed his mind and then Stalin agreed.

Of much more enduring importance, however, were the American agreement that Russia should dominate Manchuria and the arrangements about the Governments of Poland and Yugoslavia. Indeed it is very difficult even to imagine the reason for the 'supreme exultation' of the Americans as they left Yalta. Mr. Hopkins, no *ingénue* by any standard, later said, 'We really believed in our hearts that this was the dawn of the new day we had all been praying for'.¹ It is true that Stalin had pledged his intervention in the war against Japan; it is true he had offered toasts to Mr. Churchill and Mr. Roosevelt in words that were not only good to hear but wholly justified. But all the main questions—the sort of government Poland and Yugoslavia should have, the amount of Russian reparations, and Russia's attitude to the United Nations organization—were left for the future to interpret. And Mr. Roosevelt had so far failed to recognize the fundamental unity of outlook with Britain, and the essential difference of the Russian system, as to tell Stalin privately that Hong Kong 'should be given back to the Chinese or internationalized as a free port'.² In so doing he gave Stalin reason to think that there were possibilities of playing off one Power against the other, when he should have realized that only a solid united front can save the world from Communist domination, and the end of freedom.

It was fortunate for him, though not so happy for the 'new day' of which he thought that he had seen the dawn, that he had but two months to live. He was not to see how little his hopes would be fulfilled. But he was, almost at once, to see how unreasonably human nature can behave. General de Gaulle changed his mind about going to Algiers to meet the President. Headstrong egoists had made the war. They were now carrying it to its conclusion; they found it much easier than to make a peace.

¹ *Ibid.*, p. 859.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 854.

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But already the last campaign had been launched on its course, in the west, as well as in the east and in the Far East. While Mr. Roosevelt was on his way home, the Russians were clearing up the fortress blocks on their communications after reaching the Oder; the British were crushing the fanatical resistance on the northern end of the Siegfried Line; the Americans were opening the bloodstained chapter of Iwojima. The machine jolted over the points in the west; but in Russia the command was unchallenged and in the Far East the MacArthur-Nimitz tandem was directed by men who in the end were sensible enough to compose rivalries before they produced any damage or delay.

Russia was now at the pinnacle of her strength relative to the Germans in the east. She must have had almost, if not quite, the three to one *gross* superiority that one or two critics astonishingly thought necessary to victory. It was, of course, the strength of the armies *en présence* that alone counted, and, as we have seen, her ingenuity and the Allies' lavish supply of transport always assured Russia the local superiority necessary. In the event, when first Koniev and then Zhukov attacked from their bridgeheads across the Vistula, a breakout was achieved swiftly, and with astonishing completeness.

Marshal Koniev opened the campaign with an attack, following an exceptionally heavy bombardment, on January 12th. The Sandomierz-Baranov bridgehead had been established in the preceding summer and, though the Germans had sealed it off with a dense area of defensive works, the Russians were through in two days and in their white winter camouflage the tanks advanced across southern Poland. It was not ideal weather for them; the snows of the preceding week had melted. But while the Germans tried to hold his right, they went through on the left at high speed. By this time, too, Zhukov on his right, had begun to attack from his bridgeheads below the Pilica; and Rokossovsky was forcing the Narev defences to invade East Prussia while Chernyakovsky attacked from the north, attempting at once to force the Insterburg Gap and turn its defences from Tilsit. Petrov,



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echeloned on the left rear of Koniev, advanced against Jaslo and the Dukla Pass in the Carpathians.

This was the greatest of the Russian offensives; but it moved with the precision of a machine. Kielce, the centre of the most violent attack on Koniev's right, fell on the fourth day; and his left was already only forty miles from Cracow. Meanwhile, Zhukov had crossed the Pilica, stormed Radom and turned north-east to enter Warsaw on January 17th. He had crossed the Vistula north of Warsaw, covered by Rokossovsky, while the latter was forcing his way into East Prussia from the south and Chernyakovsky was pressing down from the north. Within a week the latter had captured Tilsit, and Rokossovsky, Neidenburg, while Zhukov had captured Lodz. Koniev on the same day had occupied Cracow and was at the Silesian frontier. Four days later he had reached the Oder. Rokossovsky on the same day was operating on battlefields of the first world war and had captured Tannenburg, Deutsch Eylau, Osterode and Allenstein. In another four days he had reached the Baltic, north of Elbing, and had thus cut off East Prussia from Pomerania. The province which held so high a place in German regard was henceforward isolated from the rest of Germany except by sea; and, as the defences of the Masurian area had been pierced, its chance of a prolonged resistance was fading swiftly away.

Koniev had by this time crossed the Oder, near Steinau, after capturing the towns of Oppeln and Brieg and establishing bridgeheads at all three places. He had outflanked the great Dombrowa coal area and the industrial zone of Silesia and swiftly secured control of it. Zhukov, a few days after Koniev had crossed the Oder, achieved contact with Rokossovsky in the neighbourhood of Bromberg and on the last day of the month entered the German province of Brandenburg. He was already in contact with Koniev near Glogau, one of the fortified centres guarding the line of the Oder. Between them, the two Marshals at the end of the month held about 200 miles of the Oder, and several bridgeheads had been established across it.

This brilliant advance in little more than a fortnight had

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been achieved by the new Russian mobility. Their Stalin tank, an 'Infantry' tank with heavy armour and a powerful gun, broke down the stronger defences and opened the way for the cruiser tanks. Their speed bred speed; for they appeared at valuable junctions before the Germans had time to carry out thorough demolitions, and the stronger positions, several of which had been established on the main communications, were by-passed. But at length Zhukov found it necessary to reduce them. To exploit his success west of the Oder it was imperative to ease his communications; and in the second week of February he addressed himself to that task. He had reached the Oder, north of the fortress of Küstrin on February 2nd and crossed the river south of Küstrin a few days later, while Koniev was gradually pinching out Breslau. Schneidemühl was reduced at the end of the second week of February, Arnswalde, many miles nearer Stettin, some days later; and Posen, the following day, February 23rd. Koniev had pressed his advance across the Oder to Bunzlau and was extending his bridgehead north and south. The encirclement of Breslau was already complete. Chernyakovsky was near Königsberg and, although the Germans, repeating their successful manœuvre of the first world war, had launched a heavy armoured attack on Rokossovsky, the two commanders were now in contact; and the German forces were compressed into a sack. While this process was developing, Chernyakovsky met his death on the battlefield and Marshal Vassilevsky assumed command.

In spite of interference from the weather Zhukov, in early March, directed his right flank on the Baltic near Kolberg which, however, was not occupied until the 18th. Meanwhile Rokossovsky was advancing upon Gdynia and later in the month he moved out from Zoppot on Danzig and stormed it on the 30th. After this, in spite of the desperate resistance in East Prussia, Rokossovsky's divisions were gradually withdrawn to make their appearance in Pomerania on Zhukov's right against the lower stretches of the Oder. Memel was reduced after a long siege on January 28th, though the exclave of Courland still held out. But the Germans had al-

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ready written off all but the Oder-Baltic area and the country west of the Oder. In East Prussia the only remaining role was to immobilize divisions from the vital areas, and to save some vestige of German pride by maintaining the resistance of Königsberg.

During the second half of February Koniev had pressed his advance beyond the Oder, at the same time that his left was approaching the Moravian Gap. His right was already across the autobahn between Breslau and Berlin, and half-way to Dresden which the R.A.F. bombed on February 14th and 15th; and when Zhukov captured Schneidemuhl he entered Sommerfeld, little more than eighty miles south-east of the outskirts of Berlin. Liberators and Flying Fortresses were bombing Cottbus, less than thirty miles farther west; and a few days later, at Grunberg, some thirty miles north-east of Sommerfeld, he was in operational contact with Zhukov's left. But resistance had now hardened decisively on the Guben-Gorlitz sector and a series of heavy armoured battles blocked the advance.

Zhukov, with all anxiety about his northern flank relieved, moved in on Küstrin in the second week of March and in his final assault he struck from the west as well as from the east and south-east. On the 12th that strong road-block on the way to Berlin was stormed. It was a significant milestone on the way to final victory. The territorial changes since the launching of the offensive in the second week in January were immense; but they were only the symbol of the vital change in the Wehrmacht. Its life-blood was steadily seeping away. Only the 'Southern Redoubt' remained as a shadowy hope of escape. The first forty days of the Russian offensive alone had cost Germany over a million casualties. Her refugee factories in the east had been overrun. Her losses in *materiel* paralleled the more important human loss. The last defence line, the Oder, had been crossed over a great part of its length and the remaining sectors were threatening to collapse.

And meanwhile the Allies in the west had crossed the Rhine. Eisenhower's plans had met with some criticism from

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the British Staff. Indeed that was inevitable. The 'broad front' policy had resulted in the battle of the Ardennes; and even if we had emerged from that critical test stronger, in the ultimate analysis, than the enemy, it was more than we deserved. Would not the same policy encourage similar hazards with perhaps less fortunate results? When the Combined Staffs met at Malta at the end of January these considerations were pressed strongly. American dramatized versions of the discussions include thunder and lightnings; and it was always clear that if Eisenhower insisted on his plan it would have to be accepted. But in this case fortune smiled on the plan and it proved a brilliant success.

Direct military liaison with Russia had already been established after a visit to Moscow by Tedder; but it seemed never to have occurred to Eisenhower that to go beyond 'matters of solely tactical importance'¹ had any dangers in a phase of the war in which strategy was inevitably and increasingly shaped by politics. As he was in this matter, as in all others, supported by the United States War Department, all that Mr. Churchill's protests achieved was the restriction to tactical matters; but that was a useful gain.

The plan to launch the Allies into Germany—the battle of the Rhineland—turned upon the hope of defeating the main enemy armies west of the Rhine. Eisenhower designed to bring the British 21st Army Group, and the American 12th and 6th Army Groups up to the Rhine in three converging movements which would cut off the German armies west of it, and compel them to fight or surrender. The 21st Army Group would develop the first 'pincers movement' by launching the Canadian 1st Army east and south-east from the Nijmegen bridgeheads with the American 9th Army advancing north from the Roer 'approximately simultaneously'.² The American 1st Army, after first covering the flank of the 9th Army, would then start the second thrust from the neighbourhood of Cologne while the 3rd Army would strike up to meet it and also provide the northern arm of the third con-

¹ *Crusade in Europe*, pp. 436, 440.

² *Normandy to the Baltic*, p. 193.

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verging stroke with the United States 7th Army advancing from the south to meet it.

Two preliminary operations had first to be completed. The 'Colmar Pocket', had not only immobilized troops which might have been used against Rundstedt, but was even used by him to create a diversion on the front of the 6th Army Group. With the assistance of four United States divisions, the 'pocket' was destroyed in the second week of February; and, when Alsace was cleared, the French 1st Army was given the task of holding the Rhine up to Bischwiller, opposite Baden Baden, and the American 7th Army was free to strike north.

The second operation was the capture of the Roer dams which should have taken place in December but for the battle of the Ardennes. The main dam, however—the Schwammenauel—was not secured until two days after the Canadians had opened their attack. By that time the enemy had opened the sluice gates and the Roer rose several feet. The water had not subsided until February 23rd.

The attack, which began in a thaw on February 8th, had therefore, to play a role similar to that of the British in Normandy. Inevitably the enemy forces were drawn north against it; and the assault against the Siegfried defences, the Reichswald forest, and the fanatical resistance of an army in steadily increasing strength, through a sea of mud, imposed the greatest strain on the troops. The advance sank to a terrible foot-slogging pace. Cleve was not taken until the 12th; but the Rhine was reached two days later opposite Emmerich. It was some days before the strongly defended town of Goch was cleared. Weeze, on the way to Geldern, followed. But meanwhile the most powerful air attack—'Operation Clarion'—on the German communications ever delivered had taken place; 9,000 aircraft from England, France, Italy, Belgium and Holland, dropped their bombs on selected targets and met with little resistance.

The following day, February 23rd, the 9th Army struck across the Roer and, though the preliminary bombardment necessitated the use of bulldozers at Jülich, the assault went

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with such impetus that by March 1st the largest town yet captured in Germany, Munchen Gladbach, was passed through, and the following day, Neuss, opposite Düsseldorf, was occupied. The same day Krefeld fell; and, on the next, the left of the 9th Army, having moved up the Meuse through Venlo, achieved contact with the British 53rd division. Within a week the Canadians had driven the Germans out of Xanten; and the first stage of the battle of the Rhineland was over. The 9th Army had captured 30,000 and the Canadian 1st Army 23,000 prisoners. The Rhine between Neuss and Nijmegen was in Allied hands.

It had, however, been a hard battle. The 9th Army profited from the diversion of troops caused by the 21st Army Group; and the United States 1st Army, similarly, both assisted and benefited by the operations north of the river Erft. The 1st Army had, indeed, covered the flank of the 9th Army's advance and found its own operations develop with unexpected ease. It was at the outskirts of Cologne, two days after the 9th Army had effected its junction with the Canadian 1st Army; and on March 7th occupied that great city. It was on this day that the greatest stroke of luck in the campaign befell the 3rd corps who found the Ludendorff bridge at Remagen—some fifteen miles upstream from Bonn—intact and crossed it. The omission to detonate the demolition charges suggests the confusion of the defence in this area. The bridgehead was swiftly extended; and though the bridge was destroyed ten days later the engineers had already built temporary bridges.

The work of the 3rd Army was more exacting. It had to clear the Saar-Moselle triangle; and, opening its operations on the same day that the 9th Army struck in the north, it was a week before Trier was captured. Farther north it had to cross the Our, Prüm and Kyll before it could move to the Rhine. Crossing the Kyll on March 4th it broke through to the Rhine, which it reached at Andernach five days later; and there on the following day it achieved contact with the 1st Army. This completed the second stage of the approach to the Rhine. A few days later Patton sent a corps across the Moselle, south-west of Coblenz, and achieved complete sur-

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prise; and the following day his 20th corps struck eastward from its bridgehead across the Moselle and Saar. The 7th Army now attacked between Haguenau and Saarbrucken; and only about the latter place did it meet with heavy resistance. But, with a powerful force striking in the rear of all these defences, the Germans, after a fierce resistance, carried on too long for safety, found their columns an easy mark for the Allies' Tactical Air Forces. It was not until March 20th that they abandoned their resistance in the Siegfried defences in front of the left wing of the 7th Army and on that day Patton's 20th corps had cut across through Kaiserlautern to Ludwigshafen on the Rhine, across the Germans' rear.

Two nights later Patton crossed the Rhine at Oppenheim, between Mainz and Worms, without any formal preparation and with negligible loss. By March 25th organized resistance west of the Rhine was over. The Allies were at the Rhine; and since the opening of the offensive on February 8th they had captured over 300,000 prisoners. The average daily capture during March was 10,000. In the last week alone the number captured in the Moselle-Saar area was 68,421. Rundstedt once again passed from the stage, this time finally; and Field-Marshal Kesselring was brought up from Italy to salvage the situation.

Organized resistance had not ceased in the Moselle-Saar triangle when Montgomery, only thirteen days after compelling the evacuation of the Wesel bridgehead, began to cross the Rhine. The Allied air forces had prepared the way by a vast interdiction programme against centres of communication. Two Canadian and three British divisions had been brought from Italy to reinforce the 21st Army Group; and, as the river crossing in many ways resembled the cross-Channel invasion, his available force of amphibious vehicles was strengthened by a flotilla of the Royal Navy. The first crossings began at 9 p.m. on March 23rd, and the United States 17th airborne division from the Paris area and the British 6th airborne division from East Anglia, escorted by fighters, achieved complete surprise by landing ahead of the troops at 10 o'clock the following morning. In spite of the

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fierce resistance of the four German parachute divisions on the left of the 2nd British Army, both it and the American 9th Army, still under Montgomery's command, made rapid progress; and their bridgehead was wide and deep enough by the end of the second day for exploitation to begin.

On this day, too, the American 1st Army pushed out its Remagen bridgehead and advanced north and east; the 3rd Army took Darmstadt from its Oppenheim bridgehead, and seized bridges across the Main at Aschaffenburg, and on the 27th, linked up with the 7th Army which had established a bridgehead at Worms the preceding day. On April 1st, when the French 1st Army crossed at Philippsburg, the 9th and 1st Armies linked up at Lippstadt to cut off the Ruhr. It had already been isolated by the air forces interdiction bombing; and, in spite of several attempts to break out, Model's force, the whole of German Army Group 'B' and part of Group 'H', was already beginning to collapse by April 13th. On the 18th 325,000 officers and men, including thirty generals, surrendered. It was the largest double envelopment in history.

What was to follow this astonishing achievement? It is of importance to discover what was in Eisenhower's mind about this time. In his Report¹ he says he had decided to thrust 'from Kassel through Erfurt and Leipzig to Dresden' in preference to a thrust in the north towards the Baltic and Berlin. Berlin he 'was now certain, no longer represented a military objective of major importance. . . . Military factors, when the enemy was on the brink of final defeat, were more important in my eyes than the political considerations involved in an Allied capture of the capital.'² But on April 5th he seemed to be doubtful about the 'final defeat'; he thought there would not be 'any definite or decisive collapse or surrender of German resistance'.³ He was even thinking of the development of a 'kind of guerrilla warfare'.

Bradley's alternative to Montgomery's plan for a 'powerful full-blooded thrust across the Rhine' mentioned the possi-

¹ *Report by the Supreme Commander to the Combined Chiefs of Staff*, p. 130.

² *Ibid.* p. 131.

³ Letter to Mr. Roosevelt, published by the White House, April 5th.

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bility of turning north against Berlin. What was Eisenhower's *real* reason for deciding to ignore a city which he admits in his *Report* the Allies regarded as the 'symbol of victory'? If we are to read between the lines of Ralph Ingersoll's *Top Secret*, which indeed leaves little to the imagination, it was that the 'British Empire wanted troops in Berlin before the Russians got there'.¹ Eisenhower's translation of this American jingoism is that Mr. Churchill's insistence was based on 'the great prestige and influence the "*Western Allies*" would later derive'² from their arrival in Berlin ahead of the Russians. It is the most astonishing event of these astonishing days, when old standards were daily being replaced by the almost incredible new ones, that Eisenhower should apparently be blind to the necessity of securing such valuable pawns and that Mr. Roosevelt should have said the final, 'No'. The facts seem to be established, though the exact sequence of events is not so certain. But if this be accepted, it seems necessary to conclude that Mr. Roosevelt, with only a week or two to live, was responsible for an almost incredible political directive and that Eisenhower was left to rationalize it in military terms. We should have preferred this great man to turn the last page of his life with a decision that better became him, and the causes for which he stood.

Within a week of the Allies crossing the Rhine, the German forces had begun to disintegrate, except in the north where the only formidable elements were left. It is interesting to note that only on April 29th did Montgomery note signs of disintegration on his front where the Canadian 1st Army wheeled north-west to clear north-east Holland. They captured Arnhem from the west on the 14th and a few days later reached the sea north of Groningen, and the Zuyder Zee at Amersfoort. And then they were halted. Any farther advance to the west would have caused greater suffering to the civilian population; and a little later the German Civil Commissioner made an arrangement with the Allies for the introduction of relief supplies.

¹ Op. cit., p. 249.

² *Crusade in Europe*, p. 436 (my italics).

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The Canadian thrust was then directed upon Emden and Oldenburg on the flank of the 2nd Army's advance. The right had reached the Weser by April 5th; a few days later it was across the Aller and, after a hard fight west of the Elbe, turned north to reach Lauenburg in the third week of the month. It moved to Wismar, on the Baltic, on May 2nd, where it contacted Russian tanks. On the same day it entered Lübeck. By this time the left had reduced the port of Bremen and the centre column was at Hamburg.

The American 12th and 6th Army Groups had found their course easier and made more striking progress. Kassel was cleared on April 4th. The 3rd Army was at Erfurt as early as April 12th; the next day it was at Chemnitz, and on the 18th it crossed the Czechoslovak frontier. By this time the 1st Army was at Leipzig, which it cleared on the following day. The Germans, recognizing that the Allied columns had cut through the heart of Germany, had already split the command, Field-Marshal von Busch being given control of the armies in the north and Kesselring those of the south. The 9th Army moving through Hanover and Brunswick had reached Magdeburg; and, by the 19th, the Americans were in control of the Mulde-Elbe as far as Magdeburg and their mission—as Eisenhower conceived it—was accomplished. A few days later the 9th and 1st Armies cleared the enemy concentration in the Hartz mountains and on April 25th made the first Allied contact with Russians at Torgau on the Elbe.

No less swift and astonishing was the progress of the American 7th Army and the French 1st Army as, with the 3rd Army now on their eastern flank, moving down the Danube, they advanced first east and then south. The 7th Army had a stiff fight at Nuremberg which it captured on the 20th, the day before the French entered Stuttgart. It also encountered resistance at Munich on the last day of the month. But three days later it captured Innsbruck and reached the Brenner Pass. Patton's columns were then approaching Linz, in Austria, after crossing the Danube and capturing Regensburg a week before.

Indeed the enemy resistance everywhere had for some time wilted. The Luftwaffe were completely unable to prevent the

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transport of supplies by air which alone made the swift and disconcerting advances of the American and British columns possible. They were as incapable of preventing the sinking of the *Admiral Scheer* by bomber command and the destruction of *Lutzow* from the air.

The Allies already felt themselves sufficiently free to turn their attention to throwing into viable order the organization which, it was hoped, would prevent the repetition of the horrors of war. At the time when the Americans were first making contact with the Russians, the San Francisco Conference was being opened; but it was addressed by a new President. Mr. Roosevelt had died suddenly on April 12th. He had been in failing health for some time; but he had refused to admit it. A man of outstanding courage, he had refused to acknowledge the disablement of a terrible disease and had won the admiration of the world. Indeed, it remains difficult to conceive of the possibility of an Allied victory if he had not shown the moral courage to launch the Lend-Lease experiment. By enabling Britain to maintain her fighting resistance, he had saved her and kept intact a base in the west which became of cardinal importance when Hitler had embroiled not only Russia but also the United States.

While the Western Allies were running loose over Germany west and south of the Elbe, the Russians from the Baltic to the Adriatic were moving west to meet them, and the Allies were moving up through Italy in the south. Never were so many troops engaged in converging movement before.

In Hungary the Germans had staked more powerful forces after the most valuable gauge of success had passed to the Russians. The diversion to this sector of forces that might have had an important influence on the struggle in Poland seems to have been the vestigial evidence of the strategy of the Southern Redoubt¹; and it was allowed to stand in the

¹ The Southern Redoubt has also been called the 'Alpine', 'Berchtesgaden' and 'Bavarian redoubt', 'stronghold' or 'fortress'. It was, of course, a reality, a deliberately prepared refuge in the mountains; but the swift advance of the American armies, the Russians and even the Allies in Italy made any retirement into it impossible.

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hope of putting a brake on a western advance that would turn the defence in northern Italy. It was of no avail, though it included Sepp Dietrich's 6th panzer army, reconstituted from the battle of the Ardennes, and a number of aircraft. In the first week of March the armour drove through the area between Lake Balaton and Lake Valencze and penetrated almost to the Danube while north of the river Malinovsky's bridgehead across the Hron was driven in. But, when it was at the peak of its success, its impetus ran down; and Tolbukhin and Malinovsky struck back. In a week both had broken through, Tolbukhin had retaken Szekesfehervar and Malinovsky Estergom; and thenceforward the Russian course was set for Vienna.

The two marshals moved steadily westward, Malinovsky astride the river, Tolbukhin farther south. The Austrian frontier was crossed north of Koszeg on March 30th, and Tolbukhin's southern column moved through the oil centre Nagykanitsa towards Graz while his colleague was attacking Bratislava which commands the Theban Gorge. He stormed that historic town on April 4th and cut the railway north of Vienna the following day. Tolbukhin had moved through Wiener Neustadt to the Semmering Pass. He was within the Alpine stronghold; and Vienna first saw fighting on April 7th. Six days later it surrendered; and the greatest strategic prize in Europe was in Russian hands. Tolbukhin pushed his advance to Linz and Graz.

Hitler, on April 16th, issued his last Order of the Day to his armies on the Eastern front: 'He who gives the order to retreat . . . must be shot on the spot.' A week before, the great fortress in East Prussia, Königsberg, had been stormed; and 60,000 prisoners had been captured. Three days before, Vienna had fallen; and more than twice as many had been taken. And the day that heard that desperate Order saw Koniev break through from his bridgehead across the Neisse towards Dresden and the Upper Elbe. His main force turned north towards Berlin, while Zhukov broke through the defences designed to pen in his bridgeheads north and south of Küstrin. Rokossovsky covered his flank on the lower Oder

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to Stettin and the Baltic. The disparity of forces was now greater than ever before; and the German comment, as usual couched in dramatic terms, sufficiently indicated the course of battles which were fought with the courage of desperation. The Russians are coming forward, said the German commentators, 'as though on a conveyor belt' under a 'permanent air umbrella'. Such words on the third day of the offensive suggested the force of Zhukov's advance. The Russians were already holding an arc of about twenty miles east of Berlin. Koniev was well beyond the Neisse at Spremberg on the Spree; and on his southern flank other armies were moving towards the still distant Prague.

The following day the Neisse defences were torn open and, after masking Cottbus he turned north-east towards Berlin, while Zhukov's left column was meeting heavy resistance south of the Frankfurt-Berlin road. A few days later his troops were in the suburbs; and, by the 23rd, Russian commanders were established in air-raid shelters of the capital. Koniev had also broken into the city from the south. On April 25th, when Koniev's troops were meeting the Americans at Torgau, Zhukov and Koniev achieved contact northwest of Potsdam; and the city was completely encircled. No words can adequately picture the scenes that followed. The Berlin buildings began to crumble to dust under the Russian shells. Gas mains poured out flames. The heavy Russian tanks rumbled down the streets where men fought in slit trenches, in cellars, in corridors and in the tunnels of the Underground. Sector after sector was reduced in this ferocious version of the Stalingrad fighting.

On April 28th, Koniev and Zhukov began the destruction of the pocket of troops (9th Army) which had been cut off about Wendish Bucholz, some fifteen miles below the Frankfurt-Berlin road and only twenty miles from the outskirts of the doomed city. On this day 40,000 prisoners were taken there, 34,000 of them by Zhukov's troops. Stettin had fallen two days earlier. Koniev's troops had reached Wittenberg on the Elbe, seventeen miles from the infamous Dessau. Germany was on the verge of collapse.

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But the collapse had begun everywhere the German troops still stood. General Alexander, now Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, was already drawing the reward of his long frustration in Italy. Little had been possible in the preceding winter when the Allied resources in Italy had been treated as a sort of bank upon which the Allies in Western Europe might call at will. But, on April 9th, Alexander opened an offensive designed to break into the Po valley. The country to be crossed, between Faenza and the great Lake Commachio, was marked by rivers and swamps. But, after a preparatory bombardment by the 15th Air Force, the 8th Army were soon across the Senio, the Santerno and the Sillaro and had taken Imola.

The following day, the 16th, the 5th Army attacked in full strength, below Bologna; and between the two armies the Germans were threatened with a double envelopment. The advance gathered impetus; and both armies were soon in the Po valley. Bologna fell on the 21st. The Po was crossed in many places. Verona was entered on the 26th; and both armies reached the Adige. Two days later, as they were attempting to escape into Switzerland, Mussolini, his mistress and several other leading Fascists were captured by Customs Guards at Nesso on Lake Como, and the first two were shot.

The next day, April 29th, Wolff¹ and General von Vietinghoff-Scheel, the military Commander-in-Chief, reopened negotiations which led to the surrender of all 'enemy land, sea and air forces' commanded by him. On May 2nd the instrument containing this engagement, signed at Field-Marshal Alexander's headquarters in the Caserta Palace, near Naples, became effective; and nearly a million men laid down their arms. This surrender included troops in the southern part of the 'Alpine Redoubt'. The surrender made amends for months of frustration; and it only recognized the obvious. For the 2nd New Zealand division had already crossed the Isonzo and made contact with Tito's troops, and other troops were heading for the southern exits of the Brenner Pass.

Montgomery was the next to receive a German mass sur-

¹ See p. 225.

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render. On April 30th Hitler committed suicide with Eva Braun in a bunker of the Reich Chancellery; and two days later the remnant of the Berlin garrison surrendered. Throughout the night long streams of grimy, unshaved men emerged from their refuges, some of them half-mad from the long bombardment and, under the glare of the searchlights, moved off to camps on the circumference of the city. Many of the 70,000 who surrendered were youths and boys of fifteen, many Volkssturm recruited hastily and half-trained. The Russians had donned their medals and smartened themselves up to demonstrate the contrast. It was the day of their triumph.

But more than a week before Himmler had taken control of affairs and through Count Bernadotte had offered to surrender to the United States and Britain only. This was refused; and on May 1st Admiral Dönitz was announced as Hitler's successor. Two days later, the day on which Rangoon fell, the Admiral sent General-Admiral von Friedeburg, accompanied by General Kinsel, Chief of Staff of Marshal von Busch, to Montgomery's headquarters on Luneberg Heath to offer the surrender of the 3rd panzer army and the 12th and 21st Armies, which had been engaged against the Russians. The offer was brusquely refused. The following day, after consultation with Field-Marshal Keitel and Dönitz, they agreed to the unconditional surrender of all the German armed forces, land, sea and air in north-west Germany (including the Frisian Islands, Heligoland, and all other islands) Holland, Schleswig-Holstein and Denmark. This being held a tactical matter, Montgomery was empowered to accept. About a million and a half troops were involved this time. The surrender took effect on May 5th.

On this same day, the 1st and 19th German Armies surrendered to General Devers; and on this day, too, Friedeburg appeared at General Eisenhower's headquarters at Rheims, but it was evident that he was intent on repeating the technique he had employed with Montgomery. Eisenhower refused to enter upon any discussion; and General Jodl, the German Chief of Staff, arrived. The instrument of Unconditional Surrender was signed on May 7th. It was

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ratified in Berlin on May 9th by Keitel, Friedeburg and Air Colonel-General Stumpf, Marshal Zhukov signing for Russia, Air Chief Marshal Tedder for Eisenhower and General de Lattre de Tassigny for the French.

May 8th was kept as VE Day in Britain and the United States with every sign of rejoicing. People were little disposed to think of the war with Japan which had still to be terminated. Few, if any, remembered that the Channel Islands, Dunkirk and the St. Nazaire-Lorient positions were still in enemy hands and that Czechoslovakia remained to be cleared. Still fewer recognized that Russia held all the strategic prizes of victory. They had been mistakenly, but deliberately, abandoned to her by America against Britain's urgent advice. Everyone was disposed to live in the moment of a relief so supreme that it could hardly be realized. To-morrow would take care of itself.

Beneath the surface of these rejoicings a lesson was making its way with difficulty into the minds of the peoples of the West. The Allied troops in their march across Germany had overrun numbers of prisoners of war camps. They had already learned that the Germans had treated prisoners with a harshness and brutality that was difficult to believe. Officers and men had been shot in cold blood after regaining their freedom by escape; and most of the prisoners had little experience of the efforts made by their friends to keep them alive.

But such experiences as these were completely overshadowed by the scenes they met in the concentration camps such as Belsen, Buchenwald, Luckenwalde and Dachau. So incredible did they seem that they were treated by those who had no first-hand evidence of them as common 'atrocities'. Until Members of Parliament and Congressmen were taken over the camps after, indeed, they had been considerably cleaned up, the facts were discredited by the majority; and it is certain that by this time many of the same people have reverted to their attitude of incredulity. Yet they deserve to be remembered by all who retain any interest in the

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survival of civilization and the standards which Christendom has established.

People were found in the camps only just alive, starved until the bony structure of their frames was showing through the skin; scarred by fiendish torture; maddened by bestial horrors that some atavistic trait in the Germans had unloosed upon them. Many of the survivors were suffering from tuberculosis, typhoid and typhus; half naked and so hard-driven that even the desire to live was flickering out. There were mounds of unburied corpses not far from their shelters; gas chambers into which thousands had been driven to perish; furnaces in which while fuel was available the bodies had been destroyed.

In some camps the skin of the prisoners had been used to make lampshades, gloves, shoes, etc.; and a patch of tattooed-skin was especially prized. There was evidence that the in-human gaolers had seats with tables to sit and drink at while watching their victims being tortured. In Buchenwald and Dachau doctors had used the prisoners as guinea pigs for chemical, physiological and medical experiments; for the injection of malaria and typhoid; for testing the reaction to freezing cold, intense atmospheric pressure and different speeds of release.

Germans were in some places compelled by the Allies to see the camps; and in others shown films of them. What effect it had no one can say, though the vast majority insisted that they knew nothing of such camps. This, indeed, might be partly true of a country which had abjectly surrendered to a totalitarian regime. It was not wise to be over-curious about the fate of missing relatives; and the Jews were admittedly fair game. But it is not for civilized people who still retain some reverence for the value of human personality to blind themselves to such horrors.

There were other scenes that soldiers will not easily forget. Montgomery mentions in his *Normandy to the Baltic* the masses of disorganized soldiery and civilians on his front in the last days of the war. But the uprooted civilian had been a common sight from the very outset. The migration of people in front of advancing armies began in Poland. They blocked

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the roads and interfered with the military operations of their own troops; they made a fine mark for the Luftwaffe who could not be expected to distinguish the civilians from the soldiers. Their milling crowds, afoot, on bicycles, in village carts, even in cars, depressed the morale of the troops as they fled from the Germans in the last stages of the Belgian Army's resistance and in the battle of France. There they filled stations, settled over them like swarms of flies waiting for the trains that came inadequately, too late or not at all.

But in the last days of the war the roads were packed by peoples moving in opposite directions, fleeing from the Russians, from the Allies, from anything, or nothing but primitive fears. With their few valuables or household furniture piled on handcarts or farm wagons, or any form of transport, they formed the background of the war. Four years after it was all over, the wandering crowds were still afoot, fleeing from the Russian-occupied territory, fleeing from one place to another in search of lost relations.

Never was so terrible a flood of human suffering loosed on the world. It has been estimated that seventeen million civilians were killed in the war in Europe. But theirs was perhaps the better fate. For even now it seems impossible to restore to millions of people the minimum of the human comfort and peace they desire. The war in Europe created these problems. Can anyone still fail to realize that the pandemics of the past have given way to more massive purges? Can anyone fail to recognize that materialistic science, which has indeed conquered so many human ills has, at the same time, released primitive lusts for cruelty and savagery that tend to slay their tens of thousands, for the thousands it saves from premature death by disease?

No one can face the horrors which the end of the war revealed without posing such questions to himself. It is just as if in a sun-lit garden one should turn a stone and uncover the revolting life beneath. Some automatic defence mechanism tends to make us forget. But that way leads to repetition of the horrors on a larger scale. It is a side of the war which at all costs everyone must remember.

Chapter Seven

ANTI-CLIMAX IN JAPAN

May–September 1945

VE Day was celebrated on May 8th; and at that time it seemed that another great campaign lay before the Allies in the Pacific. It is true that the campaign in Burma had already been reduced to clearing up operations. It is true that the United States troops had fought their bloodiest campaign to capture Iwojima, only 750 miles from Tokyo, and were actually then engaged in a fierce struggle for Okinawa, the main island of the southern part of the Ryukyu archipelago. But the Chinese had only begun to recover the American air-fields overrun by the Japanese in the preceding November; there was an elite army in Manchuria, and another of about two millions in Japan; the Philippines were not reduced until July; Japanese troops were still resisting to the death in Borneo, New Guinea, and the Solomons; in Indo-China, Malaya, Java, and Sumatra, they had not even as yet been approached. Even as late as August 2nd, Mr. Patterson, the United States Under-Secretary for War, said the Japanese 'have not yet thrown the bulk of their troops into the struggle. I can see no sign of collapse'. In different words responsible Allied figures were committing themselves to the opinion that the war in the East was far from the end, though the Governments knew that Japan was anxious to get out of the war.

The United States had planned to invade Japan itself in two stages: the first, 'Operation Olympic', in the late autumn, and the second, 'Operation Coronet' in the early spring of 1946. The Philippines campaign had been designed to cut

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Japan off from the empire she had conquered and afford a mustering ground for the invasion forces, and the campaigns of Iwojima and Okinawa to provide bases for pre-invasion operations. It was these, indeed, as the cumulation of the brilliant Pacific campaign, and the operations in Burma, that rendered the invasion unnecessary.

Let us see how this came about. In Burma, for the first time in the war, a first-rate Japanese army had been checked and then defeated in its attempt to cut the communications of the Stilwell force and with them the Chinese source of supply and, finally, out-thought, out-fought and disintegrated in the valley of the Irrawaddy. The first victory had originally been the main mission of the 14th Army, since it would clear the China supply route by its occupation of northern Burma. On this plan a strong force was to reoccupy the southern, Rangoon, area and drive the Japanese northwards to the 14th Army. As sufficient landing craft could not be provided, the 14th Army was left to occupy the south with such assistance as the 15th corps could give and by means of air supply from southern airfields when the northern were beyond practicable range.

There had been considerable changes in the command with the recall of Stilwell. Major-General A. C. Wedemeyer replaced him as Chief of Staff to Chiang Kai-Shek and Commander of the U.S. forces in China, Lieut.-General R. A. Wheeler as deputy to the Supreme Allied Commander-in-Chief and Lieut.-General D. I. Sultan as Commander of the Chinese armies in India and Burma. General Sir Oliver Leese, from the 8th Army, had assumed command of the Allied forces in South-East Asia comprising 11th Army Group (14th Army and 15th corps now detached from its command) and Sultan's Northern Area Combat Command which, in addition to Mars Task Force (formerly Merrill's brigade) and five Chinese divisions, had the British 36th division under command. In all, there were, perhaps, a nominal twenty Allied divisions and a nominal thirteen Japanese divisions (two Indian and one Burmese) exclusive of the large force on the lines of communications.

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Bhamo, as we have seen, was occupied on December 16th; and, at the beginning of January, Slim's centre column about Yeu was brought down the railway north of Mandalay. His left was in the upper Irrawaddy valley; and the 19th Indian division, a week later, was advanced to Singu on the left bank of the river. It was a natural inference that a strong force was being concentrated immediately north and north-west of Mandalay. In fact, Slim had no mind for so obvious, difficult and unrewarding a plan as a frontal attack on this strong position. But, encouraging the Japanese commander to think so, he brought in another division to the west of Mandalay while moving the bulk of his left corps round to the right 100 miles south-west of Mandalay where, on February 14th, a division crossed the Irrawaddy towards Meiktila a few days before the northern attack began. The day after that attack opened, indeed, a motorized force was only forty miles north of Meiktila; and on February 27th it seized one of the eight airfields.

In about a week Meiktila, in the rear of the Japanese facing Mandalay, was taken and the enemy attacked fiercely to retake it; while Slim's northern force, capturing Mandalay Hill two days before, was moving in upon the city also from the west. On March 19th, this force captured Ava and two days later Mandalay was occupied. Before the end of the month a division of the northern force had moved south to within fifty miles of Meiktila while another had crossed the river to relieve it. The bulk of the Japanese force was now threatened with envelopment and, after a hard fight, it broke and by April 10th had fled to the Shan Hills leaving its impedimenta behind.

Rangoon, 300 miles to the south, was uncovered; and Slim sent a column down the railway and another down the river to race the monsoon. At Meiktila his troops lived on the air; it was air supply that kept the columns in motion. The Arakan coast had been cleared by the 15th corps, after a number of obstinate battles, and Ramree Island occupied by the end of February, so that from airfields there the air supply of the 14th Army could be taken over from the northern airfields.

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Slim's force moved swiftly south. By May 1st the easterly column was at Pegu, forty-seven miles from Rangoon, and the next day the westerly was at Prome; and the following day the monsoon broke, a fortnight early. But the 26th Indian division entered Rangoon that day from the south. Gurkha paratroops had been dropped two days earlier on both sides of the mouth of the river, below the city; and an amphibious force was landed to take possession. The 14th Army had completed a memorable march and a brilliant campaign. Though the clearing up was tiresome and long, the 15th and 33rd Japanese armies were destroyed. The casualties in Burma were estimated by Lord Louis Mountbatten to be 347,000.

The Allies began to prepare 'Operation Zipper'—the invasion of Malaya. But that campaign was never to take place. This in Burma certainly played no mean part in suggesting to the Japanese that they were not the invincible military nation they had at first imagined.

But that lesson had been inculcated by campaigns in the Pacific. Mindoro, as we have seen, had been cleared by MacArthur in December; and, in less than a fortnight, on January 9th, the United States 6th Army under General Krueger landed in Lingayen Gulf, the doorway to the central plain of Luzon. The 3rd Fleet had been ranging at large between the China coast and the Ryukyus; and its carrier planes bombarded both, and Formosa in between, with impartial cordiality. It was under such diversions that the 850 ships had steamed through the Sulu Sea to land the army on the largest of the Philippines. For a week the expedition had been under air attack; and yet, by means of numerous feints, it achieved complete surprise and before nightfall 96,000 troops had been landed in a beachhead fifteen miles long and an average of four miles deep.

The troops made rapid progress towards the Agno river while a flank column was thrown out to the west of Lingayen Peninsula and another dealt with the only real resistance—on the eastern flank. A Japanese attempt to land north of the American beachhead was crushed before it could establish a

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secure footing; and, with the help of Filipino guerrillas, the central column crossed the Agno. The resistance on the left flank persisted for the first fortnight; but, on the 25th, Clark Field, the main Luzon air base, was captured. Three days later General Eichelberger led ashore, north-west of Subic Bay, his 8th Army and it advanced rapidly inland towards the 6th Army. On January 31st the 11th airborne division landed fifteen miles south of the entrance to Manila Bay, at Nasugbu; and a parachute battalion was dropped some forty miles south of Manila. Under this many-sided assault Eichelberger was able to enter Manila on February 4th. He was followed three days later by MacArthur; but it was not until the second week of March that the city was finally cleared of the enemy.

Meanwhile, on February 13th, Corregidor Island was heavily bombarded and, after a division had been landed two days later on the southern tip of Bataan Peninsula, the 503rd parachute regiment was dropped on the island, on the 16th. In a few hours it secured the island plateau. But it was not until March 2nd that the American flag was raised there; and only at the end of the second week of April was resistance finally destroyed by the Japanese blowing up the tunnel system and themselves with it. The northern part of the island and the south-eastern appendix remained to be cleared; and this task was not accomplished until the organized resistance in all the main islands of the Philippines group had been overcome.

MacArthur's objective was the conquest of the complete group so that he could cut off the South China Sea from the north by a sea and air blockade. On the last day of February a division of the 8th Army was sent to occupy the island of Palawan, the most westerly of the Philippines, which is only some 800 miles east of the Chinese mainland and 250 miles from Borneo. On March 10th the same division landed in the south-west of Mindanao. A week later another division landed in Panay, in the central Philippines. The islands of Cebu and Negros followed. On April 1st Sanga Sanga and Bongao, where the Philippines fade away in the Celebes Sea,

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were occupied by the 41st division. In these southern islands MacArthur now had bases only thirty miles from British North Borneo, and 150 from Tarakan, the centre of the oil country. Under cover of this base, indeed, the Australians landed on Tarakan on the last day of the month. Masbate, Jolo and Bohol were also occupied during the month and, with the landing on the last-named on April 11th, every major island in the Philippines had been invaded. But it was not until July 5th that MacArthur ventured to announce that the 'entire Philippines had now been liberated and the Philippine campaign can be regarded as virtually closed'. The adverb supplies a label for guerrilla fighting that differed only in scope, but not in unrelenting bitterness, from that of the main battles.

General MacArthur was too good a showman to be trusted to count accurately and his human balance sheet of the Philippine campaign is far from convincing. He put the American losses at 60,628 killed, wounded and missing; and at this cost he claimed he had killed 317,000 Japanese and captured 7,236. *The United States Strategic Bombing Survey* put the total number of killed in almost the whole of the Pacific theatre at 316,000; and the Australians certainly accounted for a considerable number. But it is certain that the Japanese lost very heavily and disproportionately in the campaign. By distributing their troops over a number of islands they gave the Americans the chance of taking their armies in detail.

While this great campaign was developing the 5th Marine corps, covered by Admiral Spruance's 5th Fleet, landed on the southern coast of Iwojima on February 19th. Admiral Nimitz had the preceding month transferred his headquarters to Guam, some 800 miles to the south and it was to halve the distance to Japan that the new campaign was undertaken. The island has an area of only eight square miles; but its nearness to Japan led to a resistance so desperate that the casualties of the assault and the defence were practically equal.

The invasion, however, came as the culminating point of five months of bombing and naval bombardment which had been intensified during the preceding seventy-four days. On

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February 16th, indeed, Task Force 58 in order to confuse the enemy, steamed close to the shores of Japan and made the first naval air-raid on Tokyo with 1,200 planes. It then steamed back to Iwojima to give support to the landing, from 800 vessels, of 60,000 Marines. The first landing was effected easily; but the Marines then found themselves confronted by a most elaborate system of defence works and more modern weapons than they had yet encountered. By the second day, however, they had secured possession of an airfield in the north of the island. By the end of the first week they had captured another airfield. But by this time a third division had been landed and with the assistance of tanks half the island had been overrun.

On March 10th the remainder of the Japanese defence force was split into three parts and, under the combined land, sea and air attack, the resistance was at its last gasp. It was not, however, until 6 p.m. on March 16th that organized resistance ceased and by that time the Marines had lost 4,600 officers and men killed, while 15,308 were wounded and 441 were missing. The Japanese dead totalled over 20,000. This, the most costly of all the Pacific engagements, in proportion to the forces engaged, gained for the Allies their most valuable prize up to that time.

Okinawa was the next American objective. This, the main island in the southern part of the Ryukyu archipelago, lies only 325 miles south of Kyushu, the southern of the Japanese islands which was marked for invasion by the United States 6th Army in 'Operation Olympic', provisionally arranged to take place in November. Okinawa was, therefore, the most important objective up to this moment; but its value depended not only on its nearness to Japan but also on its dominance of the Ryukyu archipelago, of the East China Sea, of its western rim—the China coast from Foochow to Korea—and of southern Japan. Sixty-seven miles long and from three to ten miles wide, it offered a number of beaches to the invader and, therefore, a possibility of surprise that was absent in Iwojima; but its importance was such that the defence was certain to be stubborn and prolonged.

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The invasion was¹, therefore, prepared with unusual care. Vice-Admiral Sir Bertram Rawlings' British Squadron "Task Force 57", on March 26th, delivered a terrific bombardment against the Sakishimas, the southern group of the Ryukyus, and the attack ranged as far as Formosa, while Spruance's 5th Fleet² continued its ten days' bombardment of Okinawa and the Ryukyus, and super-fortresses from Iwojima attacked air bases on Kyushu. It was under cover of these wide-ranging movements that, while Rawlings was bombarding the Sakishimas, the 77th division of Lieut.-General Simon Buckner's 10th Army landed on Kerama Retto, west of Okinawa, and within three days had established its guns within range of the main island. Then, after a realistic feint against the southern tip of Okinawa, the 10th Army's 24th corps and the Marine corps' 3rd Amphibious corps landed, on April 1st, on the west coast of the island, the 24th corps being directed towards the south and the 3rd corps towards the north.

During the first day two airfields were captured; by the end of the week the Marines had advanced five miles to the north and the 24th corps was nearing Naha in the south, and the central third of the island was in American hands. The Marines cleared the northern part of the island by the 20th; and it was evident that the Japanese were determined to make their stand in the south. There, indeed, the fighting was as bitter as it was stubborn. The Japanese fought from concrete pillboxes, from caves in the hillsides, from ravines and even from burial vaults. They were amply supplied by well-sited artillery and mortars. Their heavy fire opened an intense gun duel; and little real progress was made until Buckner, on the completion of the northern clearance, was able to reinforce the 7th, 27th and 96th divisions by two Marine divisions and the 77th infantry division.

These fierce battles, however, were fought against the

¹ It was during the invasion, on April 6th, that MacArthur was given command of all U.S. Army forces in the Pacific, and Nimitz of all U.S. Navy forces in the Pacific.

² This was the fleet called "grd" when Halsey commanded.

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background of an attack, first encountered at Leyte but now much heavier, more concentrated and more desperate, that might well have had the gravest consequences for the Allies. The Japanese attacked Spruance's ships with torpedo-bombers and Kamikaze ('suicide') and Baka (a rocket-projected plane—'a piloted version of the German V1')¹ aircraft. Only a small proportion of them made their mark; but with hits and near-misses they caused such damage that B-29's had to be diverted to the destruction of the Kamikaze and Bata bases in Kyushu. On April 5th when the Russians denounced the Non-Aggression pact with Japan and the Koiso Cabinet fell, a concerted air attack was made on the 1,500 Allied naval vessels at Okinawa, and the ground positions on the island. Several destroyers were sunk and many other ships damaged, but the Japanese lost over 300 aircraft. The next day Task Force 58 caught a Japanese force about fifty miles south-west of Kyushu, in the East China Sea and, after a two days' battle, sank the greatest of the Japanese battleships, *Yamato*, with two cruisers and three destroyers. Three other destroyers were left on fire and probably sank.

But the air attack by the Kamikaze and Baka planes wrought such damage that if the assault by these weapons had been sustained in 'greater power and concentration they might have been able to cause us to withdraw or revise our strategic plans'.² Indeed before the Okinawa campaign was over 'thirty-three United States' ships had been sunk and forty-five damaged, principally by aerial attacks'.³ But no larger ship than an escort carrier was sunk.

The Marines—1st and 6th divisions—took over a sector of the southern front; but still each advance had to be bought at least twice, as the Japanese counter-attacked with desperation. It was mid-May before Major-General Shepherd's 6th Marines broke into the suburbs of Naha; and it proved merely the beginning of the struggle for that strong defensive western pivot of the Japanese position; and the fighting about

¹ *Biennial Report of the Chief of Staff of the United States Army*, p. 83.

² *United States Strategic Bombing Survey*, p. 10.

³ *Biennial Report*, p. 83.

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Shuri, an even more important position, was even more savage. 'Sugar Loaf Hill', near Naha, and 'Conical Hill', dominating Shuri, became the most coveted prizes; and each changed hands many times. Not until May 21st was the former securely in the hands of the 6th Marines; and, about the same time, the 96th division finally overran Conical Hill. Four days later the Japanese carried out a prolonged air attack on the American ships and ground positions. They even landed airborne troops far in the rear of the front. The attack was beaten off, though not without casualties; and on May 30th, the 1st Marines captured Shuri. Within the next ten days Naha and its airfield followed.

On June 10th Buckner gave the Japanese an ultimatum. It was ignored; and the fighting went on, with the enemy troops cut into four shallow pockets. On June 21st after a ceremonial meal, Lieut.-General Mitsuri Ushijima and his Chief of Staff, Lieut.-General Isamo Cho committed *hara-kiri*. The end of the campaign had come. Many of the remaining garrison jumped into the sea and 7,871 were taken prisoners; 109,629 were killed. But the American losses were also very heavy. Two days before the end General Buckner was killed in action, and of their 39,000 casualties, over 10,000 were naval personnel of the supporting fleet. Most of the naval losses were due to Kamikaze and Baka attacks and these continued after the end of the Okinawa campaign.

The Pearl Harbour revenant *Nevada* was the only battleship to be damaged; but the carrier *Bunker Hill*, Admiral Mitscher's flagship, was hit by two suicide planes and her exploding ammunition set her on fire. Of her crew 373 were killed or died of wounds and 264 were wounded; but she was saved. The carriers *Indefatigable*, *Victorious* and *Illustrious*, of the British Pacific Fleet, came off better, and none of the squadron was put out of action by Japanese attack.

While Buckner was delivering his ultimatum the 9th Australian division landed unopposed at Brunei Bay, in north-west Borneo, and in skilful exploitation captured the Miri oilfields some miles to the south. On July 1st the 7th Australian division landed near the important oil port of

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Balikpapan, on the eastern coast of Borneo, half-way down the Macassar Strait and, with the assistance of Dutch East Indies troops, the port and whole area was swiftly captured. By the middle of the month the port was open to shipping.

The series of mutually supporting strategic bases had been extended to the south. With the base in Brunei Bay, the Allies could now cover operations on the 'Asiatic coast from Singapore to Shanghai, interdicting the enemy's overland communications and escape routes in Indo-China and Malaya'.¹ The British 'East Indies' Fleet had already resumed command in the Indian Ocean and, in the first week of July, its mine-sweepers began to clear the approaches to the Malacca Strait. From its carriers the airfields in north-west Sumatra, the western boundary of the Strait, had been bombed; and the airfields and port installations of western Malaya were shelled and bombed for two days at the end of the month. The implication of this group of operations was sufficiently obvious. The occupation of Balikpapan looked to Celebes and Java. The shape of things to come was gathering definition.

It is of importance to note that Admiral Suzuki, the Premier, had told the new Japanese Cabinet, during the campaign that 'Our hopes of winning the war are solely anchored on the fighting in Okinawa. The fate of the nation and its people depends upon the outcome.' Okinawa fell in mid-June; and since then the clouds had been gathering. The series of mutually supporting strategic bases was extended so far to the north that the raiding super-fortresses could now have fighter support over the Japanese homeland. Since the preceding November they had been operating from the Marianas; and in March the air attack was deliberately stepped up, not only as a preparation for invasion, but also in the hope that surrender might be brought about without it.

The first raid of the new phase on the night of March 9th destroyed 15 square miles of Tokyo with 185,000 casualties, including 83,000 dead; the most destructive air raid ever made.

¹ *Biennial Report*, p. 83.

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The Governments knew that early in May the Japanese had officially opened with Russia conversations designed to secure her good offices as mediator. But with her eyes on Manchuria, Russia turned an unsympathetic ear. On June 20th, the Emperor informed the six members of the Council that it was necessary to find a means of ending the war; and he intended to send Prince Konnoye to Moscow as his personal envoy to secure peace on the best terms possible. Before this project could take place there came the Potsdam ultimatum calling upon Japan to surrender unconditionally or face cumulative destruction. It included, it is interesting to note, an outline of the drastic terms which 'unconditional surrender' would entail. It was issued on July 26th, ten days after the news of the explosion of the experimental atomic bomb in New Mexico had been conveyed to President Truman in Potsdam.

The Japanese rejection of the ultimatum took on a new light in view of this circumstance. Defiance of the known forms of Allied attack was one thing; the new, incalculable factor might change that; and the impulse to resort to its use was strengthened by the fear that the 'enemy armies still unbeaten had the strength to cost us a million more'¹ (casualties). Thus it came about that nine days after the Japanese rejection of the Allies' ultimatum the first atomic bomb was dropped, on August 6th, on Hiroshima, the headquarters of the Japanese army defending southern Japan. This event marked the beginning of a new epoch. The bomb was dropped from a B-29 and the casualties and destruction were appalling. Two days later, punctual to her promise, Russia opened her attack on the Japanese positions in Manchuria. The following day, August 9th, the second atomic bomb was dropped on the naval industrial centre, Nagasaki, and once again the effects almost passed imagination.

The following day, August 10th, Japan announced her readiness to surrender on the Potsdam terms with the condition that they did not 'comprise any demand which prejudices the prerogatives of His Majesty as a Sovereign Ruler'.

¹ *On Active Service in Peace and War*, p. 374.

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In making this reservation the Japanese do not appear to have been put off unduly by the term 'unconditional'; they laid down the condition and left the Allies to decide the outcome. It was the Emperor himself who brought the impasse in his Cabinet to an end and offered the surrender; and it was the atomic bombs that gave the Prime Minister the chance to bring the Emperor into discussions which had hitherto shown the members of the Council equally divided on the question of unconditional surrender.

The Japanese reserved acceptance led to considerable discussion in Washington; but the reply was dispatched on August 11th and the President, on behalf of the Allies, stated that 'from the moment of the surrender, the authority of the Emperor and the Japanese Government to rule the State shall be subject to the Supreme Commander of the Allied Powers'. Three days later the Japanese Government announced acceptance of the Allied terms; and the Emperor Hirohito broadcast an imperial rescript informing his people. Without the Emperor's authority, indeed, it is difficult to imagine how the numerous garrisons scattered up and down the Pacific could have been brought to lay down their arms, except by means of an interminable series of battles to the death.

It was not until September 2nd that the formal instrument of surrender was signed before General MacArthur on board the United States battleship *Missouri*, Admiral Nimitz's flagship, in Tokyo Bay. The surrender of the South East Asia garrisons before Lord Mountbatten was signed at Singapore ten days later.

To some it will always seem that the atomic bombs—the two dropped were the only ones ready at the time—were the cause of the Japanese capitulation. They were certainly the occasion; but the sequence of events outlined above shows that, as early as May, the Japanese Government was trying to get out of the war on terms, and if Prince Konnoye had gone to Moscow in June, as the Emperor's special envoy, it is known that his secret instructions would have been to accept

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any terms. *The United States Strategic Bombing Survey* sums up the situation in these words: 'It is the Survey's opinion that certainly prior to the 31st of December 1945 and in all probability prior to November 1945, Japan would have surrendered even if the atomic bombs had not been dropped, even if Russia had not entered the war, and even if no invasion had been planned or contemplated.'

What then was the cause of the capitulation? It is noteworthy that the first occasion when the Emperor instructed the six members of the Council that they must concert plans not only to defend the homeland, but also to end the war was on June 20th when it was clear that the Okinawa campaign had ended in complete defeat, the campaign upon the outcome of which the premier had said 'the fate of the nation and its people depends'. It was, of course, that campaign only as the end of a series of smashing blows, the cumulative effect of which was to suggest that even in conditions that most favoured their special qualities—their ability to travel almost incredibly lighter than their opponents and their familiarity with jungle fighting—as in Burma, and even on the very threshold of their homeland, Japanese armies could be annihilated.

Moreover their economy was then failing and had since then deteriorated still more. By the date of their surrender the tonnage of battleships, carriers, cruisers and destroyers still afloat had been reduced from an approximate total tonnage of combat ships of all sizes of 2,319,000 tons to 196,000; and, since oil imports had ceased by the end of the Philippines campaign and fuel stocks were exhausted, these ships were immobilized. For the same reason training flights of aircraft had almost ceased and combat missions had been drastically cut. Of the 10,000,000 tons of merchant shipping, 8,900,000 tons had been sunk or put out of action. The home islands were blockaded; and for many essentials they were dependent upon imports. The average per capita food consumption had sunk to 1,600 calories, though the workers in heavy industry received more. There was, as a consequence, a marked growth in the incidence of tuberculosis and beriberi.

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Japan, with her short-lived empire, was crumbling to dust. Some 40 per cent of the built-up area of sixty-six cities had been destroyed. The destruction had come from the American bombing within the preceding two months; and the air attack was showing a steady acceleration. The number of civilian deaths amounted to over 360,000. The armed forces had lost the power to afford the people any protection. The circumstances of the atomic bomb attacks invested them with all the terror of the unknown. But single raids on Hamburg and Tokyo caused more casualties and destruction.

If all these facts were known to few, only few could know that the Kwantung Army was still intact when the first atomic bomb fell upon Hiroshima. The Russians made short work of it; but, although they opened their campaign on August 8th, it was August 19th before they were at Harbin. What the common people *could* see was the devastation of their cities and the casualties caused by the air assault. They exceeded in number, according to the *Strategic Bombing Survey*, from which most of the facts concerning the destruction of the Japanese economy are taken, the combat casualties. From the Russian denunciation of the Non-Aggression Pact—four days after the opening of the Okinawa campaign—half of the Japanese cabinet had been in favour of unconditional surrender. *They knew the facts, they could foresee the end.*

The American conduct of the Pacific campaign against Japan was brilliantly carried out. The 'fleet train' which enabled the various fleets to be fuelled and supplied for comparatively long missions and which could even effect repairs of all but major battle damage at sea was a wonderful strategic device. In its solution of the main problem of naval warfare in the Pacific it was even more remarkable than the adaptation of air transport to meet the difficulty of lack of communications in Burma. The Japanese grand strategy was absurd; for if an army marches on its stomach, a country fights on its factories, and the industrial potential of Japan, as compared with that of the United States, was that of a

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very minor Power. The Japanese strategy, too, was incomparably inferior to that of the United States; and it remains astonishing that a military caste with such pretensions should have failed at least to recognize the possibility that their many bases might be neutralized. Rabaul remained to the end in Japanese hands; but its value was forfeit to the intelligent use of sea-air power over a year before.

Chapter Eight

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The war which ended in 1945 saw the swiftest movement over the greatest spaces of the greatest numbers of men and machines of any recorded. Yet it lasted six years. The ideal of the scientific soldier for a century had been a swift rewarding war. Yet with all their study, with all the twists and turns of their subtle brains, wars grow longer and more costly to everyone. For two generations they have been a luxury which no nation can afford. But now they have become a purge of peoples and races which civilization cannot afford. Some have suggested that a world 'force' periodically effects a purge to keep the world's population within the number that the bounty of nature can support. Reasonable people cannot easily accept so irrational a conception. Yet it is clear that science, man's highest achievement, takes away with one hand more than it offers with the other. It has increased the expectation of life in face of the attack of disease and shortened it more significantly against the threat of human savagery.

The number of civilians killed during the war has been put by the military editor of *The New York Times* at 17,000,000, and the total number of deaths at 35,000,000. There is a certain amount of reasonably authenticated evidence which suggests that the number of civilians killed was greater than the number of combatants. From such evidence it appears that the number of Russian civilians killed amounted to 10,000,000 and of Poles to 5,400,000, of whom 3,900,000 are estimated to have been executed or massacred in the ghetto. The Paris Institute of Research estimates that half of the Russian civilians were killed and the other half died from cold, starvation or in deportation.

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These are terrible figures; but, alone, they scarcely begin to suggest the amount of human suffering which, in fact, they represent. A great proportion of the people met their deaths with every circumstance of primitive savagery. Many of them were the victims of sheer sadism; public opinion in most countries would not permit cattle to be butchered so brutally as were many of them. And from all the statistics available one country is significantly excluded. Russia manages her procrustean policies much too discreetly to leave clear evidence. But even without her quota, is not this purge of human life and outbreak of savagery an appalling thing? The war machine ploughed up the very roots of civilization.

Of the known number of civilians murdered, according to reliable estimates, the immense majority were due to Germany; but there is abundant reason to realize that Russia was not behindhand, though as far as one can gather her adventures in mass killing were less marked. And there were possibly fewer soldiers than civilians killed in the war.

Such being the effects of the war, it is pertinent to inquire how the democracies conducted it. Many people had foreseen that wars to-day tend to ignore the distinction between combatant and civilian, tend, indeed, to threaten the survival of civilization. Was it not, then, incumbent on them to make themselves sufficiently strong to show war to be an obvious gamble? Preparedness, the only sane policy in view of such tragic possibilities, is never popular in democratic countries. But, at a minute fraction of the cost of their working capital and an infinitesimal invasion of their liberty, they could have saved themselves from the outpouring of money and life that became necessary to put an end to the totalitarian threat to both and to standards of conduct which Christendom has developed through the ages.

In September 1944, Mr. Roosevelt informed his War Secretary 'that England was broke'; and he was 'determined to plan to furnish further American assistance'.¹ Everyone realizes to-day how much British people must pay, and

¹ *On Active Service in Peace and War*, pp. 335, 344-5.

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continue for years to pay, for their refusal to face the almost negligible insurance premium of preparedness.

But, assuming Britain had to enter the war as unready as she did, how did she use her resources? She had, when France fell the reassurance that short of war, she could count on Mr. Roosevelt's support; and, quite apart from the Lend-Lease policy, without which she could probably not have survived, he contributed much that raised the war on to a crusading level. On January 6th, 1941, in his message to Congress, he said: 'In the future days, which we seek to make secure, we look forward for a world founded upon the four essential human freedoms: the first is freedom of speech and expression—everywhere in the world; the second is freedom of every person to worship God in his own way—everywhere in the world; the third is freedom from want—which, translated into world terms, means economic understandings which will secure to every nation a healthy, peaceful life for its inhabitants—everywhere in the world; the fourth is freedom from fear—which, translated into world terms, means a worldwide reduction of armaments to such a point and in such a thorough fashion that no nation will be in a position to commit an act of aggression against any neighbour—anywhere in the world.'

That was stated four days before the Lend-Lease Bill was sent to Congress, seven months before the Atlantic Charter was concerted; and its association with the Lend-Lease Bill was a moral reinforcement of Britain's cause and a reminder that, apart from France, she alone of the Great Powers entered the war, voluntarily, in support of a principle—the Rule of Law. When the Pearl Harbour attack threw the United States into the war Mr. Roosevelt and Mr. Churchill were agreed in their determination to fight 'as a unified team'. The wisdom of that decision was worthy of the great men who made it. But alliances inevitably ride the testing course of war uneasily. Neither the French nor the American command was anti-British, as a superficial study of the words and actions of Weygand, Stimson and Marshall might suggest. But each was the product of his own nation; each, with

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the shaping of tradition and training, was conditioned to a different approach to many of the vital problems the war cast up.

American military theory ignored the factor of politics, and, where it was raised, or appeared to be raised by Britain, it was met with the suspicion that the reason was some private British interest. It is astonishing but, on the evidence, true, that such a suspicion was rarely attached to the actions of China or Russia; and, in any case, as I have already pointed out, it was a cardinal factor in America's strategy that China and Russia should be kept in the war at all costs.

Now, when it is too late, it is obvious to America that China was a broken reed, that Russia was working to a completely alien policy, and that only Britain, under Mr. Churchill's guidance, was constant in a course of action that was to the advantage of the Western Allies. How much Mr. Churchill was suspected, and how effectively opposed, when he, and British generals, suggested an incursion into the Balkans! By 1947 Mr. Stimson recognized that he had been wrong and that 'the Balkans were very much a United States problem'.¹ In that, and in the refusal to take Berlin in the last phase of the war, the Americans helped to betray the main purposes of their immense war effort.

If it is not for moral and political motives that nations make war, how can they possibly justify it? It is not pacifists alone who hate and fear war as a barbarous expedient, as their conceit impels them to think. Every reasonable man and woman so hates and fears it. But if war is decided upon, it is completely illogical to ignore the purposes that inspired the decision, completely illogical, and indeed absurd, to fail so to shape one's strategy that the moral and political objectives are attained. If they are not, can one say the war is won? The 'speed' of a decision is an irrelevance, if this condition is not fulfilled. Indeed this insistence upon the 'speed' of victory suggests that there was an element of truth in Ralph Ingersoll's contention that America regarded war as a 'grim game—which is taken seriously—but still a game'.

¹ *On Active Service in Peace and War*, p. 358 n.

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But it is very difficult to imagine how Mr. Churchill, how Britain or the British Commonwealth, could have changed the American attitude. It is difficult to imagine how the defect in the American conception of war can be changed now, if it still exists. What is evident is that the manner in which the Western Allies won the war made it inevitable that there should be no real victory, no real peace, in the sense in which they understand these terms.

As compared with that, all other factors in the conduct of the war are of minor importance. The formula 'Unconditional Surrender' is at times blamed for prolonging the war. This thesis depends almost entirely upon *a priori* argument. There are no facts to support it. The formula was Mr. Roosevelt's invention and according to Mr. Sherwood, who should know, it was framed deliberately.¹ It was presumably made as an act of defiance to Germany and of reassurance to her Allies. But its deterrent effect can be measured by the fact that Colonel von Schlabrendorff made the first attempt to destroy Hitler by bomb in the spring of 1943, within a few months of the Casablanca statement, and the first aim of the conspirators was to get out of the war.² Rumania and Finland got out of the war after prior negotiation and assurances. The Potsdam ultimatum by citing the conditions at once made surrender conditional; and the actual surrender laid down a condition which was accepted in substance. The worst that can be sensibly said about Mr. Roosevelt's formula is that it sounds well but is meaningless, since no surrender can be entirely unconditional.

Strategic bombing is by some held to have been a blunder; but that thesis is unwisely drawn. It is also criticized for interferences in our proper strategy which was inevitably based on sea power operating upon exterior lines. This is in any case a large question. In general, it is difficult to think that any responsible critic condemns strategic bombing *per se*. Whether Britain was wise to devote so much of her industry and manpower to it is quite another question; but history

¹ *The White House Papers*, p. 693.

² *Defeat in the West* by Milton Shulman, pp. 130-3.

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will probably admit that it was the best decision in the circumstances. It is ridiculous to attribute to it the shortage of landing craft that hobbled the Allied strategy so much. Mr. Nelson, who controlled American production, said that he could produce as many landing craft as were needed; and there is no doubt that he could. The Pacific campaign never lacked them; they were lacking in Europe mainly in campaigns which America did not favour. Neither can it be blamed for the shortage of transport aircraft. The influence of such aircraft on logistics was not realized early enough to meet the emergencies that developed in the second half of the war except by Germany.

There can be no doubt that in many cases the bombers were wide of their targets, fatally wide on occasion, even for Allied troops. It was proved at Cassino and Caen—to mention only two instances—that bombers can be too generally efficient to be useful as the immediate preparation for infantry attack. It is certain that mere terroristic attacks shocked, and shock, all but the hardiest consciences. But, in spite of the rise in the German production of aircraft and munitions in 1944, which the *United States Strategic Bombing Survey* reports clearly show, the *Summary Report (European War)* says, ‘Allied air power was decisive in the war in western Europe. Hindsight inevitably suggests that it might have been employed differently or better in some respects. Nevertheless it was decisive. . . . Its power and superiority made possible the success of the invasion. It brought the economy which sustained the enemy’s armed forces to virtual collapse, although the effects of the collapse had not reached the enemy’s front lines when they were overrun by Allied forces.’

That conclusion will serve for the admissions of Speer, and for the more detailed evidence in the almost invaluable series of American reports on Strategic Bombing. Of the actual sorties little has been said. Each of them was a fresh battle with a skilful, determined enemy; in each of them the pilots or small crews took their lives in their hands, and the potential leadership of the present and the future is the weaker in consequence. The losses suffered by the Allied bombing

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crews, particularly those engaged in some of the American daylight attacks, make one view with relief the prospect of the development of the robot, the radar-controlled projectile, and automatic defence.

Was it the incidence on strategic bombing that led to the lack of tactical co-operation with the ground forces? That seems a particularly absurd suggestion. When we had only the shadow of armies how could anyone justify producing greater numbers of co-operation planes or greater attention to tactical co-operation? Up to the latter part of 1942 we had a shortage of aeroplane production; and it would have been a strange perversion of military theory to have spread the product evenly among all the various calls on aircraft. As soon as production began to get under way tactical co-operation needs were met; and no one can be dazzled by the effects of its use in informing General Ritchie of Rommel's movements before the critical battle of Gazala. That was at a time when the correspondents were informing the world that at last tactical co-operation was being applied. Ritchie only knew when Rommel was at his throat.

Such questions as that involved in Montgomery's suggestion of a powerful thrust across the Rhine 'into the heart of Germany backed by the whole of the resources of the Allied armies' and the alternative which was adopted, a broad front strategy, have already been discussed; and history will probably decide that Montgomery was right. Its adoption might have shortened the war and ended it in a way that would have safeguarded the purposes which the Allies had at heart.

In these, and in all the main problems of the war, the human, and not the material or mechanical was the dominant and decisive factor, although at first sight the very reverse seems the truer conclusion. Indeed, a careful examination cautions us to be chary of accepting any of the generalizations that claim our assent on the ground of the common cliché or the popular appeal. The day of the successful demagogue, Mr. Wells confidently asserted, was over; and yet precisely such a man as he buried under the modern mechanical and managerial development plunged the world into war.

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Hitler might have figured for his pen portrait of the man who in the twilight of the recent past swayed multitudes and had now passed away.

He was without doubt a very remarkable man; but those who would make him a strategist of genius must be prepared to fall back on the ancient defence *credo quia impossible*. He seems to have possessed only a short-term mind, apt to function in spasms, and as likely to plan ruin as success. His mistakes were masked continually by the finest army the world has ever seen. Indeed, its function seemed, after the first two years of the war, to be to redeem by its astonishing discipline, courage and tactical ability the gross strategical errors of the madman who had taken control of it. Imagine what would have happened if the Russians had replaced the German soldiers! They could never have fought so long against such odds, never have borne the lack of air cover and the harrying of a vast Allied air force, never have survived the defeat of Stalingrad.

Hitler and Stalin understood each other and, when they made a deal in August 1939, each was alert to extract the most out of the compact by means of any subterfuge that would be accepted. In the conferences with Molotov, in November 1940, Hitler had reason to complain that in agreeing that countries should be regarded as in the Russian 'sphere of influence' he did not mean in Russian *occupation*. Stalin over-reached him, as he has since tricked the Western Allies; but Hitler reacted by the attack in June 1941. The most astonishing thing we know of Stalin is the impression he made upon Mr. Hopkins and Mr. Roosevelt. Reading his conversation in Mr. Hopkins's record, it seems natural and sincere; and yet the succeeding years have shown how little it was to be trusted. Unlike Hitler, his were long views, though his conversation dealt with immediate issues in the way best suited to gain his immediate ends. But like Hitler, he was intent on the spread of a 'new order' and was indisposed to look askance at any means that might achieve its advance. If it is difficult to conceive of the Allies winning without the help of Russia, it is equally hard to think the war would have

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broken out in 1939 without Russia's deal with Hitler. The Allies could not have had a less generous ally; for Stalin had to be compelled to admit the assistance they gave him. And, if Russia suffered such appalling losses when compelled to engage only two-thirds of the German strength, would, or *could*, she have survived against the whole of it? Stalin played his own hand and so continues, without any trace of generosity, sentiment or real humanity. He remains, like Hitler, something of a mystery; but if Hitler's dreams of world conquest perished in the ruins of Berlin, Stalin thereby advanced his plans still further, and each was the architect of his country's fate.

How different were the two great figures in whose hands lay the destiny of the two great democracies. Mr. Roosevelt stands out like Mr. Churchill, one of the great men of his generation; and no consideration of their natural human failings can dwarf their stature. Each was accused by those who were closest to him of attempting to do too much¹; but each won the real respect and even affection of his people. Mr. Roosevelt came to the aid of Britain in her darkest hour and his success in convincing his people of how deeply their interests were engaged in Britain's survival was a rare triumph. Yet he was the product of his country and generation with its spontaneous generosity, its warm idealism and its surprising ignorance of unpleasant facts that did not agree with the facile policies it favoured. On his way home from Yalta he met Ibn Saud and later said he 'had learned more from Ibn Saud about Palestine in five minutes than he had learned in a lifetime'.² Mr. Hopkins, from whose memorandum this quotation is taken, says that he could not 'reconcile' the statement; but presumably the President implied that the vigour of the Arab position had never before occurred to him. In the climate of idealism it had been softened to a point at which it did not so openly challenge his policy.

That is now a closed question; but Mr. Roosevelt did not live to see how far astray his real policies went in the post-

¹ 'He wants to do it all himself.' *On Active Service in Peace and War*, p. 317.

² *The White House Papers*, p. 861.

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war period. He was the symbol and centre of his country's magnificent war effort. Britain and the world of free men owes him a heavy debt for that; and, if he had lived he might have been able to salvage more of the hopes and dreams of that 'new day'¹ of which at Yalta he thought he had seen the dawn.

Of Mr. Churchill it is still difficult to take the real measure. Alone of the four men mentioned he saw the war through in office and, for the greater part of the time, as the Prime Minister of his country. He was in control from its darkest hour to the supreme triumph on the European battlefield. In moments of storm and stress, as in those when the light shone on the Allies' banners, he had always the fitting word for the occasion. Astringent, defiant, encouraging, chastening, they resounded across the world. If he could not steer the Allied bark to the haven he and the other Western Allies designed, it is certain no other helmsman could, in the given circumstances. At least he saw the course clearly and tried to avoid the shoals; and no one spared himself less, no one did more to secure the Allies' true victory. For that Britain, and every country where freedom continues to have a meaning, owe him an immense debt. He made his mistakes as everyone does. The gravest of these was his support of Tito and abandonment of Mihailovich; and American suspicions of British 'imperialism' prevented him repairing the worst effects of that blunder by military action.

The generals, and the men they led into battle, were the executants of the Government's policies. The two men whom the United States selected for the overall command in the West and in the East differed greatly in character. It is not easy to imagine any general, British or American, who could have done better than Eisenhower in welding together a unified Allied team. But of his military quality we know little, except that he represented the outlook and limitations of the American school that bred him. But, of that, sufficient has already been said. MacArthur was a man of very different mould; and it is easier to see why the masterful minds of the

¹ Cf. p. 248

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United States Navy regarded him with 'astonishing bitterness' than to understand why Mr. Stimson and General Marshall were mystified by that reaction. But MacArthur had no inconvenient ally to suggest alternatives to him; and, indeed, it is hard to conceive how a difficult military problem could have been more brilliantly solved. He carried through to success at comparatively trifling cost, and in a shorter time than was ever expected, a successful campaign against a desperate enemy.

The Admirals—King, Nimitz, Halsey, Spruance and the rest—fought like MacArthur a novel war by novel means and saw it through to complete success. Of the British Admirals—Pound, Cunningham, Tovey, Fraser and the many others—it is scarcely necessary to recall that they provided the basis on which Britain survived the Battle of the Atlantic to become the base from which Germany was invaded and conquered. Their deeds were rarely seen in true perspective. The covering of the northern convoys, entailing desperate battles under the worst conditions, lost nothing of its urgency and peril by repetition. And when there seemed to be no engagements in progress, it was because of their efficient vigilance. In the Pacific the American Navy came frequently under the spotlight; in the West the British Navy knew no similar triumph. Yet Cunningham's dominance of the Mediterranean against a more powerful enemy remains a unique chapter in naval history; and Harwood's conduct of the Battle of the River Plate showed how skilfully and courageously the Navy could seize its few opportunities of surface battle in the broad seas. It remains true that the Allies' victory was based upon sea power.

The army produced in Dill and Brooke two outstanding figures; and in its field commanders it had also soldiers whose names will find their way into the pages of its history. Alexander was probably the finest professional soldier; but Montgomery was the better suited to his time and, with greater opportunities, secured the greatest field success. He has not the knack of endearing himself to others; but it is strange to find the apparent reluctance of the tribute Eisenhower pays

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to him. There were a number of very distinguished field commanders behind the rank of Wavell, Gort, Alexander and Montgomery; and it must have been noted that behind Eisenhower and MacArthur there were several commanders who, with much less experience than their British colleagues, graduated swiftly and brilliantly. Perhaps the outstanding one in Europe was Patton who, in spite of his faults, created a name and tradition that had their influence on the enemy.

It was air power that transformed the conception of sea power and ground fighting tactics, and if it is invidious, it is inevitable, one should think of such British names as Portal, Dowding, Park, Harris, Tedder and Pile, and such Americans as Arnold, Doolittle, Kenney and Brereton. Even more, however, than was the case with the other services, the real artificers of victory were the young men who actually faced the enemy in the air. Indeed the savage repression of the Germans serves to throw into higher relief the heroism of these men, of the men and women who were dropped as agents into Occupied countries and of the personnel of the various underground movements.

But, however we estimate their stature, it was the Generals, the Admirals and the Air Marshals and the men they commanded who secured victory in the field. In spite of the lime-light's tendency to pick out this or that piece of war material, or to focus on the mass of it, it was still the human factor that was dominant—not the numbers of men, but the men individually, each pulling his best in the team. That remains the governing condition in peace as well as in war.

The times are dark with the portents of the future. Whether there shall be peace with freedom, or peace with slavery, or whether war must once again engulf the world, no one can say. Unhappily, there are many who think lightly that the first is much easier than it can be, and many more whose attitude tends to betray it. At least Britain will be as great as she intends to be. It is 'not in our stars but in ourselves' that our destiny lies; and that at least should be clear from our behaviour during the war. A nation which exhibited so

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much scientific skill, so much ingenuity, such willing dedication to hard toil, so much patient endurance of suffering, so much good fellowship, cannot be enslaved except by its own consent to the specious promise of reward without the labour, of safety without the insurance. We can escape war, escape too the more threatening alternative of peace with slavery, if we are ready to pay the price. There is no other way; and the meaning of war waged by a totalitarian country should now be plain.

CHRONOLOGY

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1923

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Nov. 9 Ludendorff and Hitler demonstrate against proclamation of Bavarian independence, 21

1924

Feb. Hitler sentenced to 10 years' fortress detention; released November, 21

1925

July 23 French evacuate the Ruhr, 22
Aug. 14 Stresemann, German Foreign Minister, 22
Oct. 16 Locarno Treaty signed, 22

1928

August Pact of Paris signed, 22

1929

Sept. Briand's suggestion of United States of Europe accepted in principle by European nations, 22

1930

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National Socialist Party the largest in the State. Hitler, on second ballot, secures 13,400,000 votes as against Hindenburg's 19,300,000 for presidency, 24

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Mar. 5 National Socialists secure 44 per cent of the votes, 24

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Jan. 26 Germany signs ten-year Non-Aggression Pact with Poland, 25
Aug. 2 Hindenburg dies. Hitler President and Chancellor, 24
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1935

March Hitler formally reintroduces Conscription, 25
Oct. Mussolini opens campaign against Abyssinia, 26

1936

Mar. 7 Hitler denounces the Locarno Treaty and remilitarizes the Rhineland, 26, 27
May 9 Italy annexes Abyssinia.
July 18 Spanish Civil War begins, 27

1937

July 7 Japan begins conquest of China, 26
Nov. 5 Hitler, in secret conference in Reich Chancellory, outlines his views on German expansion to begin with the annexation of Austria and Czechoslovakia, 28

1938

Jan. 11 President Roosevelt suggests discussion with Britain, France, Germany and Italy on international situation, 29
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1939

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21 Poland, for second time, invited to join Anti-Comintern Pact, 43
31 British and French guarantees to Poland announced, 32

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7 Italy invades and annexes Albania.
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17 Russia suggests Triple Alliance with Britain and France, 34
26 Mr. Chamberlain announces compulsory military training, 33
28 Hitler rejects President Roosevelt's proposal, denounces the 1935 Naval Agreement with Britain and the 1934 Pact with Poland, 33

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19 Poles sign Protocol with French General Staff, 40

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15 German armour reaches Brest Litovsk, 43
17 Soviet troops enter Poland, 43
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29 Soviet-German Treaty of Friendship delimiting frontiers in Poland.
Estonia, under 'mutual assistance pact', grants sea and air bases to U.S.S.R.; similarly Latvia, October 5th, Lithuania, October 10th, 49

Oct. 1 Hel Peninsula, Poland, surrendered; Polesie Group, north of Lublin, surrenders, October 5th, 43
Hitler announces Peace Plan to Reichstag; rejected by Mr. Chamberlain, 12th.
10 Admiral Raeder suggests invasion of Norway to Hitler.
14 *Royal Oak* sunk in Scapa Flow by U-boat, 46

Nov. 18 German mines sown from the air in English estuaries.
23 *Rawalpindi* sunk by *Scharnhorst* and *Gneisenau* off Iceland, 47

30 U.S.S.R. invades Finland; appeal to League of Nations; U.S.S.R. expelled from League after refusing its mediation, 49

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Jan. 8 Rationing—bacon, butter and sugar—begins in United Kingdom.
27 Keitel given charge of invasion of Norway plan, 51
31 Exchequer subsidizes food.

Feb. 1 Second attack on 'Mannerheim Line' opens; penetrated 15th, Summa captured, 50
16 H.M.S. *Cossack* releases prisoners from *Altmark* in Norwegian waters, 51
18 Finns retire in Viipuri sector.

Mar. 1 Hitler issues directive on invasion of Norway, 51
Finnish delegation leaves for Moscow; Russo-Finnish Peace signed, 12th, 50

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10 First battle of Narvik; second battle, 13th, 52
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 20 Italy asked for Armistice; signed, 24th.
 24 Japan requests the closing of the Burma road; Britain
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 26 U.S.S.R. ultimatum to Rumania, demanding Bes-
 sarabia and N. Bukovina; accepted, 27th.
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19 Hitler in Reichstag makes ‘final appeal’ to common sense; Lord Halifax replies, 22nd.
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7 Luftwaffe open third phase of Battle of Britain: attack on London, 71
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17 Italians occupy Sidi Barrani, 74
27 Ten-year Pact between Germany, Italy and Japan signed in Berlin; Mr. Churchill, October 8th, states Burma road to be reopened, 121

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23 Hitler meets General Franco at Hendaye.
28 Italian ultimatum to Greece; frontier crossed, 72. 74

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11-12 Taranto attacked by Fleet Air Arm: three battleships and cruisers damaged, 74, 75
12 Molotov in Berlin for discussions with Ribbentrop and Hitler, 89
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21 Greeks enter Koritsa 75,
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9 German and Italian aircraft sink H.M.S. *Southampton* and hit H.M.S. *Illustrious* in Sicilian Channel, 75
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19 British occupy Kassala, Sudan, 82
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30 Derna captured; Cyrene, February 3rd, 79

Feb. 1 Agordat captured; Keren reached by advanced patrols, 2nd, 82
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7 General Berganzoli surrenders, south-west of Beda Fomm, 79
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10 Kota Bahru captured. *Prince of Wales* and *Repulse* sunk.
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18 Field-Marshal Wavell announced to succeed Lord Linlithgow as Viceroy of India in October; General Auchinleck to be C.-in-C. India immediately.

29 U.S. forces land Nassau Bay, New Guinea; Rendova Island, New Georgia group, Trobriand and Woodlark Islands occupied, 30th, 191

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9-10 United States airborne and British paratroops land in Sicily, followed by landing of United States 7th and British 8th Armies. British capture Syracuse, 172

12 Russians launch attack on Orel salient, 179

19 Rome marshalling yards bombed, 175

20 Mtsensk captured, Orel sector; Bolkov, 21st, 179

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16 Messina entered by U.S. troops, 173

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17 First Quebec Conference begins, 187

17-18 Peenemunde research station bombed by R.A.F. 168-9

23 Kharkov entered by Russians, 181

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3 8th Army land in Italy. Italian Armistice signed; announced, 8th, 176-7
4 Allied troops land Huon Gulf, New Guinea.
8 Stalino captured; Donetz basin now cleared, 182
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10 Backhmacch junction captured, 182
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12 Mussolini rescued by German paratroops, 175
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Lae captured by Australians, 192
19 Yartsevo, Smolensk sector, captured; Russian advance over greater part of the front, 182
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22 *Tirpitz* damaged by midget submarines.
Allies land at Bari, Italy.
25 Smolensk and Roslavl captured, 182
27 Foggia occupied from Bari, 177
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2 Australians capture Finschafen, New Guinea, 193
4 Corsica liberation completed, 177
7 Three Dnieper bridgeheads secured; Nevel captured.
183
Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, at Quebec appointed supreme commander S.E. Asia, arrives in Delhi.
12 Azores agreement with Portugal announced: Britain to have naval and air bases.
12-13 Volturno river offensive opened by 5th Army, 177
13 Italy declares war on Germany.
New Georgia group, Solomons, announced now in Allied hands.
14 Zaporozhe captured, 184
18 Second Moscow Conference.

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Oct. 20 Lord Wavell installed as Viceroy of India.
21 Subhas Chandra Bose announces formation of 'Free India' government in Singapore.
23 Melitopol captured, 184
25 Dnepropetrovsk captured, 184
27 8th Army take Montefalcone.

Nov. 1 Perekop captured.
U.S. forces land at Augusta Bay, Bougainville Island, Solomons.
3 U.S. carrier-borne aircraft raid Rabaul harbour, Solomons, 193
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12 Zhitomir captured, 185
15 Sangro bridgehead, established, 9th; five battalions across by 22nd; extended to 2,000 yards deep and 10,000 long by 24th.
18-19 R.A.F. begin 'Battle of Berlin' (continued until March) by dropping 350 4,000-lb. bombs on the city in half an hour, 168
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20 Russians cross Dnieper at Cherkasi, 185
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28 Teheran Conference, 186
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Dec. 4 Second Cairo Conference, 166
6 Moro river reached by 8th Army; bridgehead established, 10th.
7 Monte Camino peak taken by 5th Army.
14 Cherkasi captured, 185
15 U.S. 6th Army land at Arawe, New Britain; airfield taken, 19th, 193
21 Ortona captured by 8th Army; finally cleared, 28th.
22 Tito made Allied commander by agreement of military representatives of U.K., U.S.A. and Yugoslavia.

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26 Radomisl retaken; Korosten, 29th, 185
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30 Kazatin captured, 199
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Jan. 2 U.S. troops land at Saidor, New Guinea.
4-5 5th Army open attack east of Cassino.
5 Lieut.-General Sir Oliver Leese appointed commander of 8th Army.
7 San Vittore taken by 5th Army.
10 British occupy Maungdaw, Burma, 197
11 Mosyr offensive opened by Russians; Mosyr and Kalin-kovich captured, 15th, 200
15 Leningrad offensive begins; Krasnoye Selo captured, 19th; Novgorod, 20th; Mga, 22nd, 200
17 Garigliano crossed by 5th Army; Minturno captured, 20th, 205
18 Mr. Churchill returns to London after a bout of pneumonia.
22 Anzio landing; Nettuno and Anzio captured, 24th, 205
24 General Sir G. Giffard C.-in-C. S.E.A. Army Group; Lieut.-General Slim, 14th Army.
27 Liberation of Leningrad from blockade and artillery fire announced, 200
31 U.S. forces attack Roi and Kwajalein islands in Kwajalein atoll; Roi taken, February 2nd; Kwajalein, 5th, 194

Feb. 3 Ten German divisions encircled in the Zvenigorod-Kanev-Shpolia area, south of the Dnieper, 201
4 U.S. Navy bombard Paramushir, Kurile Islands.
5 Rovno and Luck captured; Nikopol, 8th; Shepetovka, 11th, 201
14 Green Island, north of Bougainville, occupied, 193
15 Cassino Abbey bombed and bombarded, 206
16 Truk attacked by U.S. naval task force, 194, 195

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17 Kanev pocket destroyed; Germans surrender.
18 Staraya Russa captured, 200
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22 Krivoi Rog taken, 201
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25 Japanese cleared from Ngakyedauk Pass, Burma;
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27 New Britain and New Ireland cut off with their garri-
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29 U.S. force lands on Los Negros, Admiralty Islands,
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Mar. 4 Marshal Zhukov opens spring offensive; captures Volo-
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13 British and West African troops land on Japanese
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23 Chinese troops in the Mogaung valley.
24 Major-General Wingate killed in plane crash, 198
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29 Zhukov captures Kolomea and forces Pruth crossing,
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2 The Pruth crossed, Rumania entered, 204
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3 *Tirpitz* set on fire by Fleet Arm Barracudas.

4 Ukhru captured by Japanese.

5 Kohima isolated, 198

7 German divisions encircled north of Razdelnaya; surrender, 8th.

8 Zhukov at Czechoslovak frontier, captures Sereth; Koniev reaches river Sereth, 204

10 Odessa captured. Attack on Perekop, 204

11 Russians capture Zhankoi and Kerch, Crimea, 204
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15 Tarnopol captured, 204

18 Code telegrams by diplomatic missions banned; diplomatic bags censored; diplomatic and consular personnel forbidden to leave England—except American, Russian and Dominion, 206

19 Sabang and Lho-Nga airfields, Sumatra, bombed by carrier-borne aircraft.
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20 Turkey suspends export of chrome to Germany and her satellites.

22 Allied troops land at Hollandia, New Guinea, 194

24 All overseas travel from the United Kingdom banned, 206
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May 1 Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in London.
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7 Sevastopol assault; captured, 9th, 204
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11-12 5th and 8th Armies open offensive against Gustav Line in Italy; French troops break through, south of Liri valley, 14th, 209

14 Kohima ridge cleared of Japanese, 199

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May 17 U.S. forces land on Wakde Island, New Guinea; resistance ceases, 19th, 195
18 Cassino and Monastery captured; 8th Army cut Highway 6 behind the enemy, 209
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16 The King visits Normandy.
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Sept. 1 Eisenhower opens his H.Q. in France: Montgomery, now Field-Marshal, reverts to command of 21st Group, General Bradley commanding 12th Group, 218

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28 General Stilwell recalled to Washington, 240

Nov. 1 British forces land in Walcheren Island; resistance ends 9th, 221
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12 *Tirpitz* sunk by R.A.F. in Tromso Fjord.
15 Jaszbereny, Hungary, and Skoplje (Uskub), Yugoslavia, occupied.
22 U.S. 3rd Army captures Metz, 221
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3 U.S. 1st Army counter-attack on north side of Ardennes salient, 223
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12 Koniev opens offensive from bridgeheads across Vistula, 249
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26 Auschwitz concentration camp liberated.
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10 Andernach, on Rhine, contact between U.S. 1st and 3rd Armies achieved, 256
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20 Ludwigshafen and Kaiseraultern occupied by 3rd Army; Saarbrucken and Zweibrucken by 7th, 257
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30 Danzig captured by Rokossovsky, 252
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9-10 *Admiral Scheer* sunk by R.A.F. bombers, 261
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15 Sea, in north Holland, reached by Canadians; east end of Zuyder Zee causeway, 16th, 259

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April 16 Arakan coastal area, Burma, occupation completed.
Koniev breaks through from Neisse bridgehead, between Dresden and upper Elbe, 262

18 Ruhr pocket eliminated, 258
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19 Lauenberg, on Elbe, reached by British 2nd Army;
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21 Bologna captured, 264

22 British 2nd Army at outskirts of Bremen which surrenders, 26th, 260
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23 Zhukov's forces reach Berlin, 263
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24 Count Bernadotte transmits to British Legation, Stockholm, Himmler's verbal offer to surrender to U.K. and U.S.A. alone, 265

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26 Taungoo captured by 14th Army.

28 Mussolini and members of his Cabinet shot, attempting to cross Swiss frontier, 264

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2 Berlin surrenders, 265

3 German envoys from Dönitz reach Montgomery's H.Q., Luneberg Heath; agree to Unconditional Surrender, May 4th, to become effective, May 5th, 265
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May 5 German 1st and 19th Armies surrender to General Devers, 265
6 Jodl arrives at Eisenhower's H.Q., Rheims; Unconditional Surrender signed, 7th, 265.
8 VE Day, 266
9 Capitulation ratified in Berlin by Field-Marshal Keitel, Admiral Friedeburg and Air Col.-General Stump, in presence of Zhukov, Tedder, Spaatz and de Lattre de Tassigny, 266
10 14th Army link up with troops from Arakan front, trapping Japanese in south-west Burma.
13 Wewak Peninsula, New Guinea, occupied by Australians landed from the sea.

June 13 Brunei town, Borneo, entered by Australians, 278
16 Truk bombarded by British Pacific Fleet.
20 Sarawak landing by Australians.
21 Okinawa—organized resistance ceases, 278
26 Security Charter signed at San Francisco by fifty nations.

July 1 Balikpapan, Dutch Borneo, landing by Australians, 298
5 General Election in United Kingdom.
Minesweeping of approaches to Malacca Strait by British East Indies Fleet until 10th; air and sea attacks north-west of Sumatra, 279
14 Kamaishi, north of Tokyo, bombarded by U.S. 3rd Fleet.
16 First atom bomb exploded in New Mexico; reported on same day to President Truman at Potsdam, 280
17 Potsdam Conference.
British Task Force take part with U.S. 3rd Fleet in air attack on Tokyo area.
18 Japanese naval forces, Tokyo Bay, attacked by carrier aircraft.
23 Heavy sea and air attacks on Kure naval base, for two days, with assistance of British ships.
24 Malaya west coast bombed and shelled by British naval forces, 281
26 Ultimatum to Japan from Potsdam, 280
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27 B-29's drop leaflets on eleven Japanese cities warning them of destruction from the air.

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July 28 Kure and Kobe naval bases and inland sea raided by 2,000 carrier aircraft and bombers from Okinawa; continued 29th and 30th.

29 Potsdam Ultimatum rejected by Japanese, 280
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30-31 Shimizu shelled by U.S. 3rd Fleet.

Aug. 2 The King receives President Truman on H.M.S. *Renown* in Plymouth Sound and visits him on U.S. Carrier *Augusta*.

6 First Atomic Bomb dropped—on Hiroshima, 280

8 Russia declares herself at war with Japan as from midnight, 280

9 Second Atomic Bomb dropped—on Nagasaki, 280

10 Japan announced readiness to accept the terms of the Potsdam declaration, with reservations as to the Emperor's sovereignty, 280

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15 VJ Day.

21 Kwantung Army surrenders in Manchuria.

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